THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Ethnography of Schooling, Religion and Ethno-nationalism in the Kachin State, Myanmar: Dreams and Dilemmas of Change

Mart Viirand

Social Anthropology PhD
School of Social and Political Science
University of Edinburgh
2015

DECLARATION

This is to certify that that the work contained within has been composed by me and is enirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

08.06.2015

Signed,

Mart Viirand

ABSTRACT

For much of its recent history, the Kachin State of northern Myanmar has been wrought with civil warfare that has come to define its image from the outside, as well as being a key signifier in the conceptual life worlds of many of its ethnic nationalities. While Myanmar is currently witnessing significant – if still uncertain – political and economic transitions, the Kachin State remains largely marginalized from these processes. Rather than an absence of state power, however, this marginalization had led to competing projects of statecraft vying over resources, military control and popular legitimacy in the highly fragmented territorialities. In this thesis I engage this complex landscape through the nexus of formal schooling, organized religion, and ethno-nationalist politics. My primary ethnographic focus is on the emergence of several private schools led by a younger generation of Kachin educators. I am asking why these schools arose at this point in time and what has motivated their leaders to strive for institutional autonomy in settings long characterised by a scarcity of human and material resources. I argue that, in addition to their explicitly stated pedagogical aims, these initiatives are serving particular visions of social and political development, defined by Christian moralities and ethno-nationalist ideologies. As such, their practice can be read as a form of critique towards the established systems of schooling and governance led by the central state of Myanmar, as well as that of the Kachin Independence Organization, the main contender for political self-determination in the area. Decades of perceived marginalization of the Kachin populace of northern Myanmar are the principal motivator for the leaders of these educational projects. However, important points of tension also exist within the Kachin society itself, both in the fields of schooling and religion. A focus on the institutions of private education thus enables me to ask questions about the nature of local political authority, ethnic identification, and the influence of organized religion more generally. By employing a historical perspective to complement my ethnographic material, I am tracing the emergence of ideas, practices, and institutions of schooling that were born from the missionary encounter and decades of military conflicts. These, together with the more recent cosmopolitan ideas of modernity, lie at the heart of contemporary efforts to provide alternative paths to schooling, and to attain the dreams of social development for the Kachin society that the educators seek.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF MAPS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation has come into existence through the invaluable help and support of many people and years of labour. Just as the latter proved a greater challenge than I could ever have imagined when I first set out on this path, the trust, encouragement and aid I have received along the way have proven to be the greatest personal lesson. I am deeply grateful to my supervisors, Jonathan Spencer and Tobias Kelly, whose help through this process has been immense. Their prompt and detailed readings of my drafts never failed to produce insights and much needed guidance. Their literature suggestions provided me with new perspectives on political anthropology and Southeast Asia. The readings also helped me with library research and especially surviving those awkward post-fieldwork months, while giving me lessons in style and structure so vital for anthropologists in expressing our subject matter. Perhaps the greatest merit in our working relationship was the face-to-face discussions over my invariably late and patchy drafts. I remember always finding a meagre material distraction for existential worry as I gazed at the sparsely populated, anachronistic glass cabinets outside Jonathan's office. Yet if I entered the room disheartened and lost in my latest attempts at making sense of the Kachin realities, I stepped out encouraged and motivated to pursue the search. It was this profound pedagogic skill, at once edifying, inquisitive and spurring, that I hope to have learned outside the immediate topic of our supervisions for my own eventual use in educational work. If the written work at hand fails to live up to the hopes and expectations bestowed upon me by Toby and Jonathan, it is to no fault of theirs and only by way of my personal shortcomings.

Though never my formal supervisor, I remain deeply indebted to another scholar of Southeast Asia who first enticed and introduced me to the region, Karin Dean. From the blind faith she put in my talents at the end of my undergraduate degree, through the long and often errant years that followed, her support has been of enormous help. Not only has she encouraged myself and several other young

researchers to challenge ourselves academically, but she has created conditions for our career development that are as humbling as they are rare. It was her readiness to take risks at home and abroad that first introduced me to the complex Kachin borderlands and that opened up the possibility of academic research for myself and others.

Dyan Mazurana and Anton Baaré's masterclass at the Aarhus University made me think differently of armed conflicts and responsibilities of social science research. Together with the eclectic group of students, the short semester probably gave the first push toward my eventually choosing a research track that I did.

Throughout writing the present work, I have received immensurable support from a host of colleagues and friends. Triinu, the unsung mother of Estonian anthropology, whose unyielding belief in the abilities I struggle to credit to this day has helped me through so many hurdles over the past five years. Laur, whose unceasing energy, optimism and curiosity has led us both to keep pushing further in search of unanswered questions and unheard voices in the northern Myanmar. Siisi, Piibe, Helelyn, Saskia, Marje, Juhani, Koreen, Amani, Ruth, Luke, Katja and others who have been wonderful colleagues and friends through these years. I am also indebted to the numerous people who read drafts of the present thesis in its various states and provided me with crucial critique and comments.

All those who helped me throughout the eighteen long months of my fieldwork in Southeast Asia are simply too numerous to count here. My language teacher, *Sara* Kha Lum, who adopted me in his simple home in Chiang Mai and tutored me through his impeccable knowledge of Jinghpaw and English, Biblical stories, and worldly wisdom and wit. Charged with the unthinkable task of teaching me Jinghpaw, I will never be able to repay those months of unyielding patience spent under his care and tutelage. Kaw Mai, who first introduced me to my language teacher and was later my closest friend and colleague in both Chiang Mai and Myitkyina. The enthusiasm and help I received almost every step along the way him, whether finding education officials in Dugahtawn or mangosteen stalls in the alleyways of Wichayanon, will forever be remembered. Khun Seng, who led me into the topic of Kachin schooling and in whose care I spent the months studying and

teaching at the Teachers Training College in Mai Ja Yang. Naw Hkawng whose courage and enthusiasm helped me traverse the difficult journeys to Laiza time and again, and whose unceasing efforts in the field of schooling were an unceasing inspiration. Ja Naw who first pressed me on the ethics and aims of my research and would later spur me on through his encouraging words and presence. Yawbawm who helped me understand so much of the underside of politics and everyday in the Kachin State as we finished one can after another on the banks of Irrawaddy. Sam, who was such a close friend and ally and with whom I shivered through many a cold Myitkyina morning waiting for the sermon to end. Joe and Awng Htun and Zau Lat whose company kept me looking forward to each return and who took me into their families and homes. This is list is far from exhaustive and there are many more people left out of it than those mentioned. None of you is any less important than the others and you all know who you are.

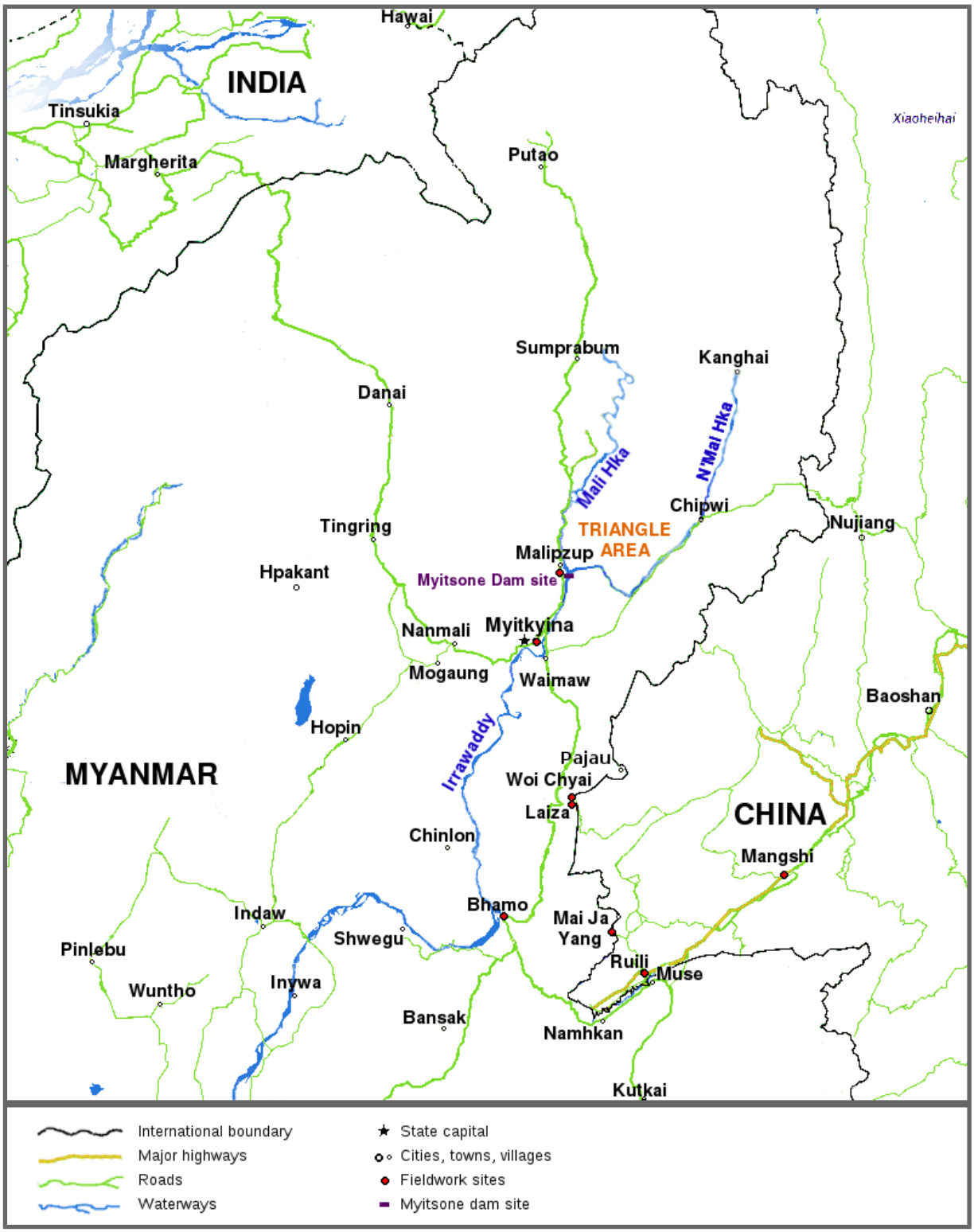
I am also grateful to a number of local organisations, both in Myitkyina and the KIO enclaves. The Nawng E Hku Mission School in Laiza and Teachers Training College in Mai Ja Yang enclave kept me as a boarder on several successive occasions and I have never received more hospitality or warmth than I did during those visits. Likewise, I am thankful for the hours spent on the different campuses of private schools in Myitkyina (whose names I am omitting to protect identities) where I am equally grateful to their staff and students for the long hours spent in conversation and for showing patience for my endless string of questions. The Kachin Theological College Library in Nawng Nang was kind enough to open its doors to me for research amid the well-stacked shelves. Not a few times did I owe it to the charitable librarians who kept the doors open for my sake and waited patiently as I scanned or copied the volumes of Jinghpaw journals. The Kachin Baptist Convention Literature Committee and the Kachin Baptist Convention Archives were both open to hold discussions with me on the topics of history and literacy in the Kachin areas. In Laiza, the KIO Education Office welcomed me on several occasions.

My parents, who showed their unceasing support long before I entered doctoral studies and without whose spirit and love I would never have gotten so far. Jüri, who kept believing in my goals even after they diverged from their initial path, and

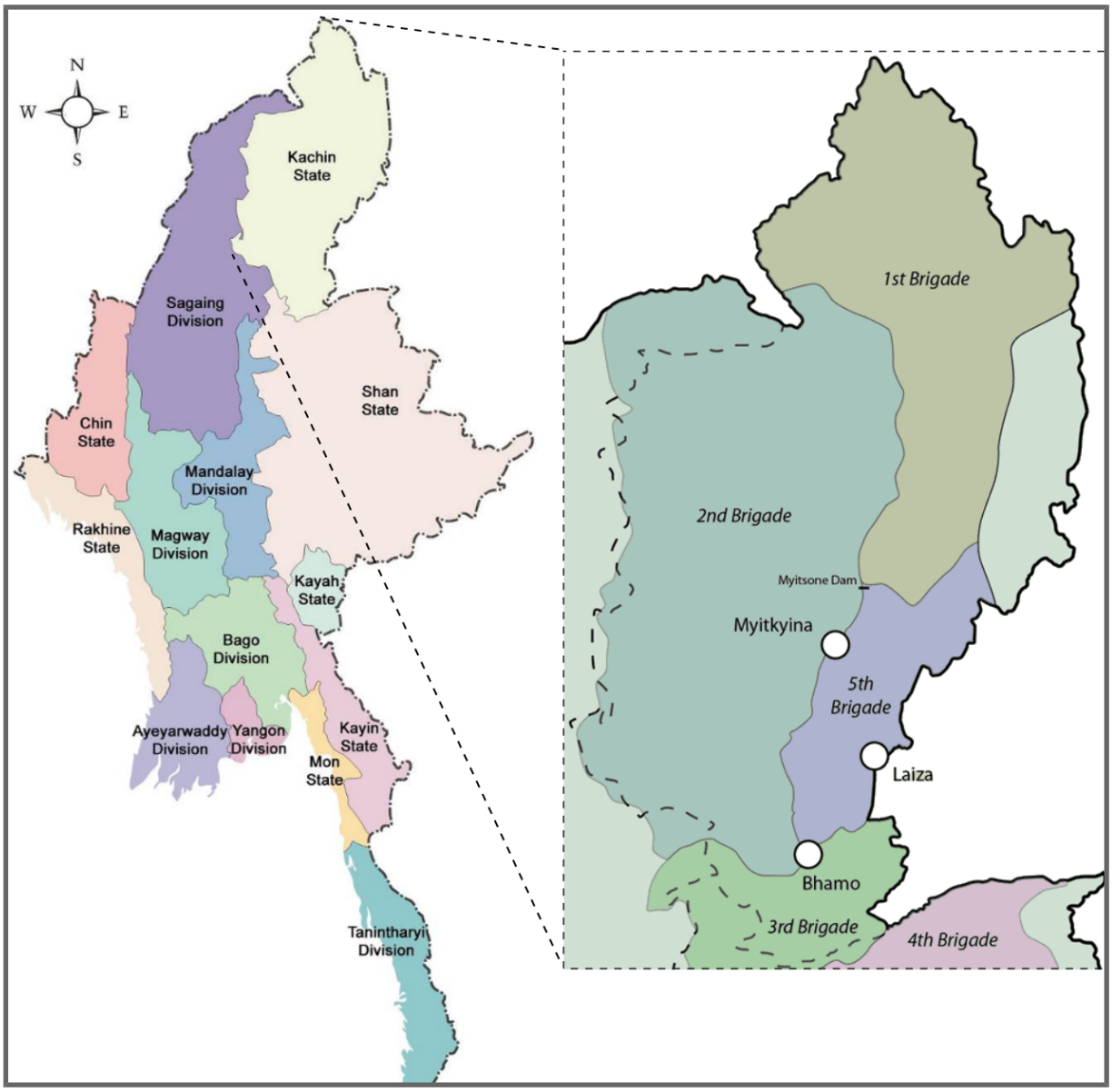
treated me like a son through all those years. You are missed beyond words. Last but not least, I want to thank my partner and companion, Kerry, who helped anchor my sanity through the years and especially the final weeks and days of writing.

This thesis was made possible by the generous financial support from the Kristjan Jaak scholarship of the Archimedes Foundation in Estonia and the Tweedie Exploration Fellowship from the University of Edinburgh.

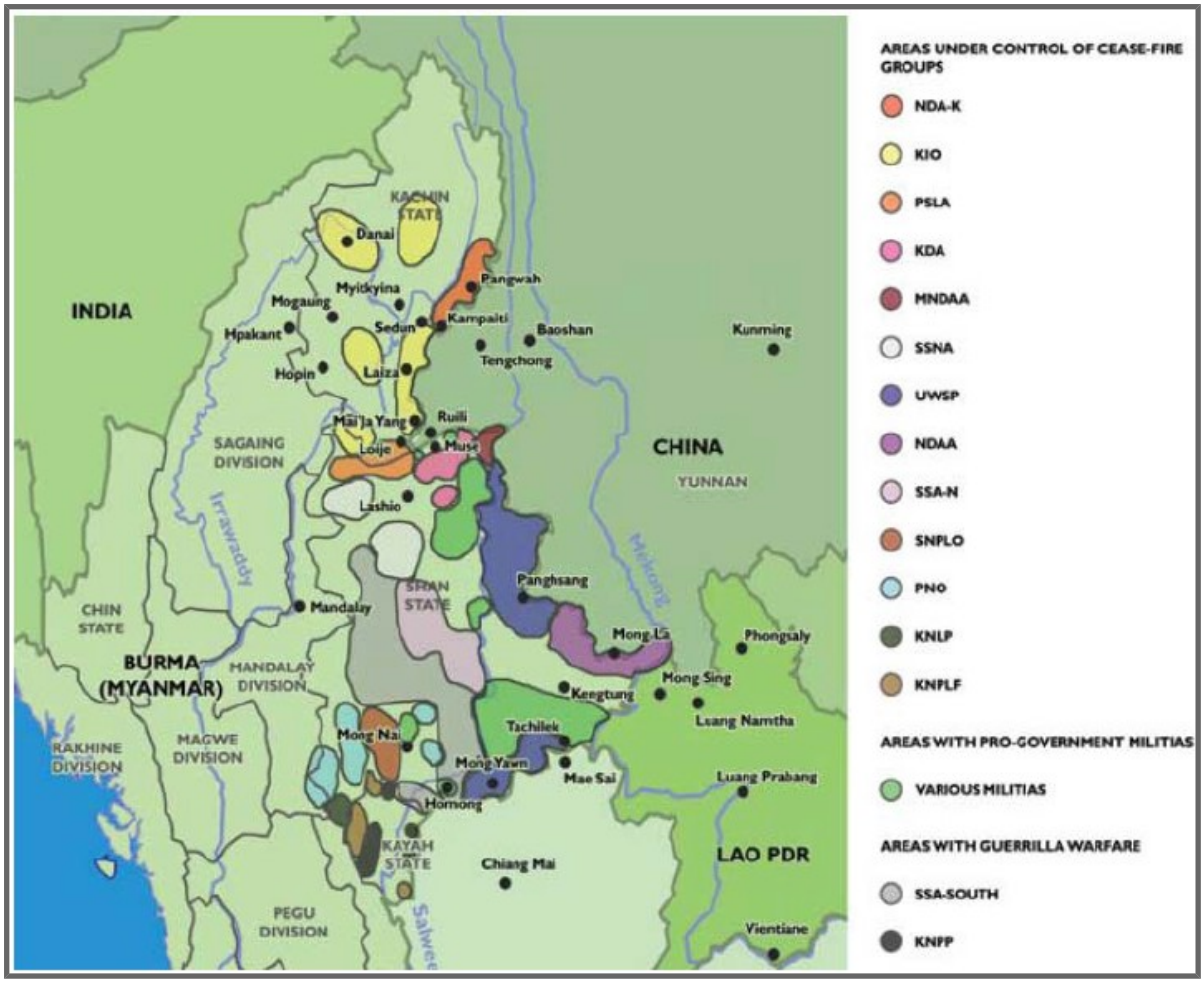
MAPS



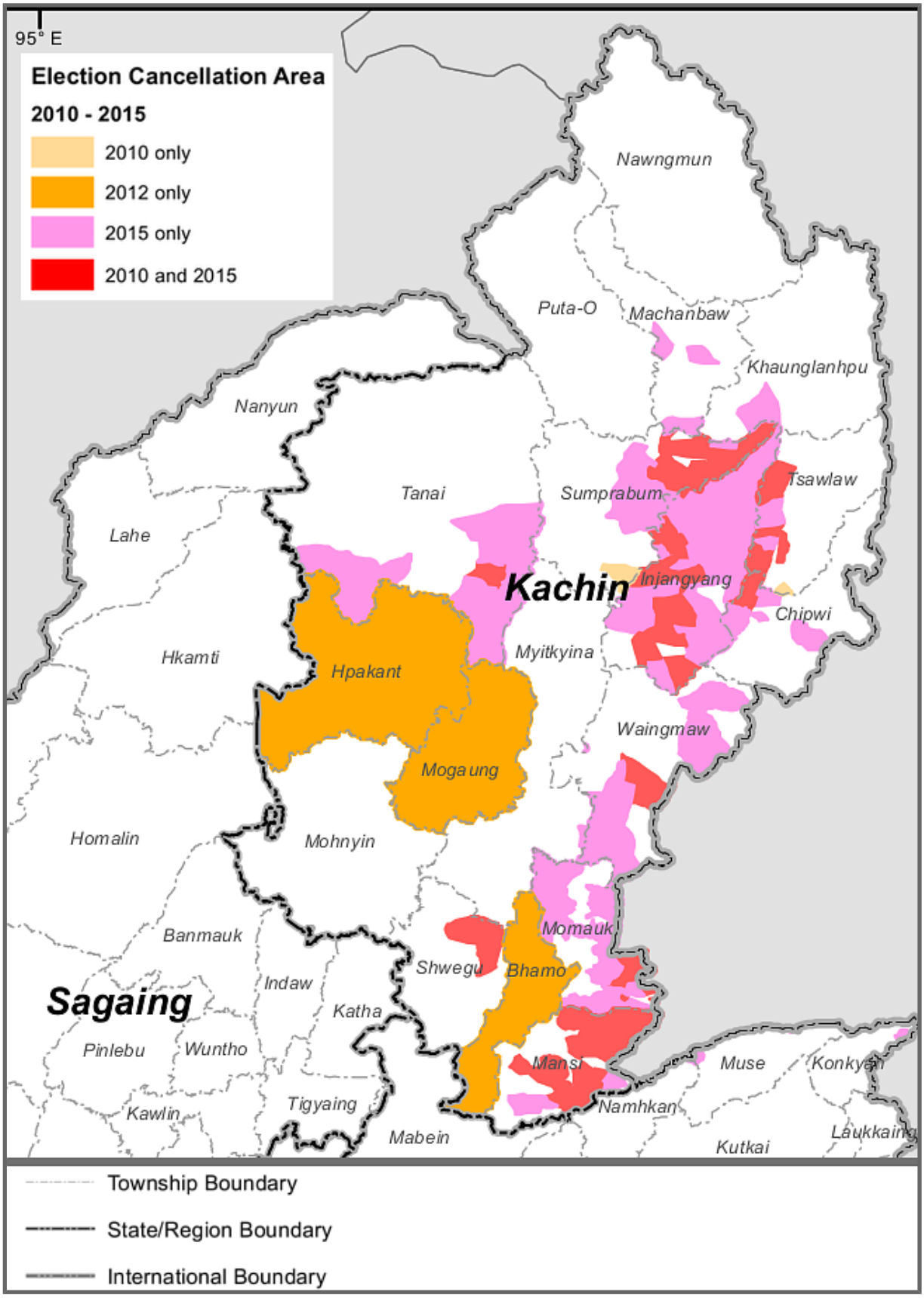
Map 1
Locations of fieldwork sites in the Kachin State, Myanmar and Yunnan Province, China



Map 2
Administrative divisions of the Union of Myanmar (left) and approximate domains of KIA brigades (right)
(Adapted from Free Burma Rangers 2012)



Map 3
Approximate areas across Myanmar controlled by major armed groups in 2008
(Adapted from Kramer 2009, 2)



Map 4
Election cancellations in the Kachin State 2010 – 2015
(Adapted from Myanmar Information Management Unit 2015)

INTRODUCTION

Through most of their modern history, the Kachin Hills appear shrouded in the fog of war. The brief interlude of tense ceasefires divided two long wars, one lasting decades from 1961 till 1994, the younger reigniting in 2011 and showing no end in the foreseeable future. Militancy defined the colonial representations of the Kachin tribes, much as it does the contemporary Kachin self-representations of their former roles vis-à-vis the courts of Ava, Yunnan and Britain. Representations produced by the post-independence Burmese governments followed suit in their deep-seated fears of national disintegration starting from the borderlands. The armed Kachin resistance that began in the 1960s was greedily consumed by the propaganda mills in Yangon. The theme of armed conflict for political self-determination defines most contemporary accounts of the Kachin State in the local narratives and international media coverage alike. The persistence of ethnic tensions is also a key concern for the Chinese companies interested in politically stable environments for rampant extractive industries and has increasingly shaped portrayal of the Kachin tribes across the border. Beyond representations, the lived histories of war in the Kachin Hills have shaped successive generations and hundreds of thousands of lives. The extensive kinship system that retains its primacy in social relations means that almost everyone has lost a relative in the war. As Véronique Bénéï notes in her study of embodied nationalism in Indian schooling, "war has been one of the most powerful motifs shaping the social memory 'imagined communities' the world over" (2008, 12). The Kachin context is not an exception.

Yet in other equally significant ways, the everyday realities in much of the Kachin State are only indirectly affected by the conflict or hold out, despite its constant threats. The hardy inhabitants of Kachin hills and borderlands, a population of some 1,2 million people, have found ways to adapt to the pervasive state of exception and navigate the competing sovereignties. Trade routes might be regularly disrupted, but products and produce still find their way to the markets. The multifaceted life of Christian churches – a notable phenomenon in the

predominantly Buddhist Myanmar – has only intensified and extended through the conflict. Unions are cast in lavish marital ceremonies that even the poorest households seek to honour. People go about their daily business as best they can, braving chronic scarcity, corrupt bureaucracies and uncertain futures. Perhaps the greatest show of resilience, central from the perspective of the present thesis, is that of the schools where thousands of lives are daily shaped using the barest of means.

Formal schooling in Myanmar has had a difficult past. Commonly recognised as the most advanced educational apparatus in the colonial Southeast Asia, successive Socialist regimes stifled academic freedoms and competiveness in the decades following Burmese independence from Britain. Today, education remains a highly contested field. On the national level, increasingly vocal teachers' unions are calling for greater decentralisation and academic freedoms. In the Kachin State, long-standing assimilationist policies are subject to similarly zealous political critique. Further complexity is added by the existence of competing systems of schooling, run by political organisations long at war against the central government. At the same time, increased openness and integration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the wider world have created conditions for the emergence of a younger class of intellectuals commanding academic capital and international networks. In the Kachin borderlands, as in other similar contexts across Myanmar, their efforts have led to crucial beginnings of civil society interventions and activism. In a word, contemporary northern Myanmar remains a region of extremes. It is torn between the shifting landscape of economic and political reforms, grassroots development and partial democratisation, while still gripped in armed conflicts over ethno-nationalist survival, encroachment of foreign extractive industries, and highly corrupt and dysfunctional state institutions.

This thesis engages the above context by investigating the nexus of formal education, organised religion, and ethno-nationalist politics in the Kachin State, Myanmar. My primary focus is on the recent emergence of several private schools in this territorially and ideologically fragmented context. I am asking why these initiatives were started at this point in time, and what has motivated their leaders to strive for institutional autonomy in conditions of violent political instability and chronic scarcity of resources. At their core, the private initiatives in question serve

particular visions of social development that are shaped by Christian moralities and ethno-nationalist ideologies. However, as I will argue in Chapter 2, their practice can also be read as a form of critique towards established systems of schooling and governance. Decades of perceived marginalisation by the central government have led to political grievances that are the principal motivator for the leaders of these projects. Yet important points of tension also exist in the Kachin society itself, both in the sector of state schooling and organised religion, that have at once constrained and directed the educators in question.

Geographically, the areas studied in this thesis belong to a wider territorial entity known today as the Kachin State. It is the northernmost administrative division of the Union of Myanmar, wedged between the two regional powers of China and India. This present configuration belies the fact that for most of their known history, the Kachin areas were largely outside the sway of larger centralised polities in the surrounding lowlands. Active participants in a commerce of tea, slaves, and opium among other things, the forebears of the Kachin tribes likely enjoyed relative autonomy, self-determination, and occasional dominion over smaller neighbouring communities. Their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness survived the British colonial encroachment, transformative encounters with the Christian missions, as well as decades of conflict and political marginalisation by the central regimes of independent Burma and Myanmar.[1]

The dearth of published primary research on the Kachin Hills since Edmund Leach's (1954) classic theoretical treatise, still part of the foundational canon for political anthropology courses in the British tradition, conveys something of the historical paradoxes of the area. Famously, *The Political Systems of Highland Burma* all

1 The use of Burma versus Myanmar in academic literature has been been a matter of some controversy. The newer designation came into official use in July 1989, when the ruling StateLaw and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) changed it on the grounds that Burma was a colonial invention and that the Union of Myanmar would be more inclusive of the diverse ethnic nationalities inhabiting the country. While the United Nations accepted this change, it was less well received in the academic and activist circles (e.g. Dittmer 2008; Skidmore 2003). Many argued that using Myanmar meant recognising an illegitimate regime. Inside the country, too, people largely continued to rely on Burma out of resistance or habit. While recognising the importance of these debates, I have chosen to follow the usage of David Steinberg (2007) by referring to Myanmar to designate the period after 1988, and Burma for the period stretching back to 1886 and the start of British annexation.

but disregarded the wider geopolitical context affecting the Kachin population at the time of Leach's fieldwork conducted as a British officer.[2] After his attempts to return to the area as a civil servant and anthropologist in the late 1940s were voted down in the tense post-war political climate, Leach distanced himself from Burma for good (R. Anderson 2007). Subsequent developments inside the country (following the coup of 1962 Burma became an increasingly isolated dictatorship) left the Kachin State one of the least 'accessible' regions in the world. It was not until the late 1990s, and the temporary cessation of armed hostilities, that these complex borderlands started opening up to the attention of social scientists, historians, and journalists (Sadan 2013; Kiik 2012; Robinne et al 2007; Dean 2002; Lintner 1997a; Wang 1997; Smith 1991).

The developments that had occurred since the Second World War were nothing short of remarkable, especially if one were to take the circumscribed Leachian image of the Kachin society at face value. Political tensions with Yangon, particularly the latter's failure to live up to the promises of the historic Panglong Agreement, had resulted in deeply engrained resistance to the Burmese state.[3] Following decades of brutal civil war, the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and its military wing, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), controlled large stretches of Sino-Burmese boundary as well as resource-rich enclaves further inland. Intricate borderland economies, regulated not by states but by local relations of patronage, kin, and

2 Biographical evidence and Leach's scarce exposition on the design of the Political Systems suggest that the interaction between the colonial state and the Kachin communities was a topic with which he was intimately familiar (R. Anderson 2007). His earlier dissertation for the London School of Economics (LSE) contains insightful discussions regrettably omitted from his later published work (Leach 1947). In a lecture delivered in 1987, he admitted that his limited focus on the "indigenous social systems" that entirely erased the wider geopolitical context had been "a mistake" (R. Anderson 2007, 27).

3 The Panglong Agreement was signed on February 12, 1947, shortly before Burmese independence from Britain, between the Governor's Executive Council led by Gen. Aung San and the representatives of Chin, Kachin, Shan peoples. The conference leading up to it had been one of the preconditions set by the British regime for Burmese independence as it tried to appease political tensions between the Frontier Areas (largely inhabited by various ethnic nationalities) and the Bamar majority. The agreement lay down tentative provisions for full regional autonomy in internal administration, and was accepted in principle by all parties to the agreement. The agreement was never honoured by the successive Burmese regimes who took power after Gen. Aung San's assassination on July 17, 1947. Today, its contents inform the chief political demands of the Kachin Independence Organisation and many other bodies representating ethnic nationalities in Myanmar.

opportunism, supported local militaries while also allowing organisations such as the KIO to engage in autonomous projects of statecraft. Shared between fragmentary sovereignties and local warlords, the Kachin borderlands at the turn of the millennium constituted multi-layered political assemblages. Their very existence raises crucial questions on the nature of statehood, ethnicity, civil society, and the role of religious organisations in contemporary Southeast Asia.

As already noted, a further question is presented by the historical persistence of Christianity, a central element in contemporary expressions of Kachin ethnicity. While foreign missions of the early 20th century had found significant success across a diverse set of tribal societies in the uplands of Southeast Asia (Michaud et al 2013; Goh 2005), the subsequent fate of many 'indigenised' churches was markedly worse than those in the Kachin State. What makes this a particularly puzzling fact from a comparative perspective is that the military regimes governing Burma through most of the 20th century were no less violent or ideologically opposed to Christianity than most of their neighbours. Yet despite having been deprived of most foreign mission support since the early 1960s, the 'indigenised' Christian organisations like the Kachin Baptist Convention established themselves firmly between the Theravada Buddhist Myanmar and Communist China, claiming majority conversion across the Kachin urban centres and rural hinterlands alike, and even embarking on evangelical missions to the tribal uplands of Yunnan. Today, the Christian organisations command an unprecedented institutional reach through a network of semi-autonomous churches. Their relation to a set of Kachin civil society initiatives that arose in the post-1994 ceasefire era remains instrumental and at times contradictory. The same holds true for clerical involvement in the wider public sphere and local politics across the Kachin society.

Focus on armed conflicts and political elites in the ethnic borderlands has often diverted scholarly attention from the more concealed civilian institutions and processes. Formal schooling constitutes one such field. Widely recognised as one of the central institutions of modern statecraft, the existence of multiple systems of schooling in the Kachin State has attracted strangely little scrutiny. If the majority of Kachin youth enrol in the highly ideological Burmese schooling for at least some part of their educational careers, then why do they still subscribe overwhelmingly to

the ethno-nationalist project of the KIO? Why has the KIO invested significant resources into building an alternative apparatus of schooling that, despite nominal autonomy, employs Burmese curriculum almost to the letter? How have the Kachin dialects survived decades of assimilationist language policies banning the languages from most primary schools in the Kachin State since the 1970s? Why have so many of the young foreign-educated Kachin intellectuals chosen to pool their resources into independent non-state and non-church projects, despite subscribing to the ideological and spiritual tenets of the latter? These are but some of the paradoxes one encounters in the sphere of formal schooling in the Kachin State that the present work seeks to unravel.

In order to contextualise these tensions in historical perspective, I trace the emergence of ideologies, practices and values that were born from the missionary encounter and decades of militarised opposition to the central government. These lie at the heart of contemporary efforts to provide alternative paths to schooling, and to attain dreams of social development for the Kachin society. It is these dreams that are the primary aim of the private educators to whom this thesis is dedicated. Before moving on to a brief discussion of some of the theoretical concepts used, I offer a short ethnographic fragment that weaves together many of the issues faced by formal schooling in the contemporary Kachin State.

Temporary burial

It was March 26th 2011. Riding through the sun-drenched streets of Mai Ja Yang enclave, the second important enclave of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), we arrived at the house of Niye's aunt.[4] As we parked our mopeds and entered the courtyard a peculiar sight caught my eye. Two barefoot boys were busy arranging brownish stacks on the ground. I could not tell what they were but the sizeable court was dotted from one end to the other. The boys kept walking in between, flipping the bundles around in the sun. I cast a curious look at my friend and he beckoned me closer. Down on the hot white stones of the pavement laid hundreds of books upon books. Most pages had darkened, many dissolved into

4 Unless noted otherwise, all personal names appearing in this thesis are pseudonyms to protect identities of the people with whom I worked.

curling clumps of pulp. There were cardboard covers eaten by the purplish mould, spines broken into splines, flyleaves flapping in the breeze. There were dictionaries, textbooks, magazines, novellas. An odd volume of Encyclopaedia Britannica, few catechisms and a thick leathered Bible. Some pages were in Burmese, a few in Jinghpaw, most in English. Despite the general air of decomposition, there were stacks where the middle layer was nearly dry. Woodless covers still showed some colour. Where the fungi had not thrived, things looked promising. Almost none of the thousands of pages drying in the sun would ever be even. Yet some of those wavy volumes were probably not beyond repair. This, I would later learn at tea, was a material casualty of the latest Kachin War.

The uncertain truce struck in 1994 had started its final deterioration a few months before I arrived. Further south, the political tensions between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Myanmar's central command had heightened. Though people knew little, if anything, beyond rumours, the air was getting thick to breathe. This time, it could be real. As partial reports and hearsay circulated, interwoven with threats and hopes, Niye's family would have to make decisions. Less than a mile from the Chinese border, a quick temporary retreat was within reach. But one could hardly make one's whole life hop the boundary. Decisions had to be made. Nyie's uncle had once been a central figure in the Education Office. He was remembered as a great intellectual with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. The library he had painstakingly assembled through the years of previous war (1961-1994) and the ensuing ceasefire period (1994-2011) would have been sizeable by any standards. In northern Myanmar, it was immense. As the new war edged closer, the books were hastily removed from the shelves and packed into plastic bags. The bags would fit into boxes and these in turn buried into shallow graves dug outside the kitchen window. A little silverware and a few pieces of china were all that accompanied them underground. Thankfully, those first clouds would eventually blow over. After a few weeks' refuge with Niye's relatives near Ruilli, the family had cautiously resettled in their homestead in Mai Ja Yang. Thus the day I arrived to visit Niye's aunt had been a day of temporary exhumation. At the time, the devastation of 2012-2013 was still an unrealised possibility.

I believe this impressionistic fragment illustrates the state of education in

contemporary Myanmar in three ways. The first is the state of rupture and discontinuity. The history of higher education through the years of Burmese military rule (1962-2011) could be read as "closure and slaughter", not only of students but the whole institutional framework as such (Zar Ni 1998, 126). From the notorious blasting of the student union building on Rangoon University campus on the 7th of July, 1962, to the successive reprisals and partitions of the academic apparatus; military regimes in Yangon and Nay Pyi Daw have treated institutions of higher education as a veritable threat to national stability and to their grip on power. In areas like the Kachin State that, from the early 1960s onwards, have been wrought with armed conflicts for political autonomy and resource control, this distrust reigned even stronger. On a policy level, this distrust came to be expressed through attempts to eradicate local languages and cultural distinctiveness. Teaching in ethnic languages, such as Jinghpaw, was banned from the curricula.[5] Print media was subjected to iron censorship. Advancement in cadres and officer corps came to depend on ethnicity (or, as it is more commonly referred to locally, one's 'national race').

None of these measures entirely succeeded in their assimilationist aims, despite decades of loss and grievances. The popular resistance that they engendered, assuming ever more complex institutional forms, constitutes the second trait illustrated by the passage above. Powerful Christian organisations, such as the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), and armed political groups such as the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), maintained popular legitimacy and limited territorial sovereignty, despite persistent attempts to stifle their base of support. Intellectuals like Niye's uncle, whose library had met the fate of so many of the regime's opponents, laboured to establish an independent apparatus of schooling that would serve the aims of political socialisation locally defined.

The third metaphor is that of endemic failure, on either side of the conflict, to establish sustainable frameworks for institutional cooperation or to reach satisfactory political solutions. Despite significant efforts over the past two decades, the educational apparatus of the KIO remains underfunded and subject to the

5 For recollections of this period in the Chin and Karen States that, on the level of assimilationist policies, shared many similarities with the Kachin context, see Zar Ni 1998, 259-264.

Burmese curriculum. Its graduates are cut off from most educational opportunities in the rest of the country. It is against this impasse, as well as the historical legacies sketched above, that a new generation of Kachin educators ultimately labour. The majority of them remain both ideologically aligned with and institutionally dependent upon larger organisations within Kachin society and beyond. Yet they have also made determined efforts to establish alternate paths, past churches, government schools and the KIO. These endeavors aim to actualise their visions of society through the means of formal schooling. Perhaps the most crucial register in those visions is that of ethnicity, through which boundaries of the political community are constantly being reiterated and imagined.

Conceptualizing ethnicity in the Kachin State

Scholars studying Myanmar have increasingly employed the concept of ethnicity as an analytical fixture upon which to analyse wider political developments and the constant resistance to and by the numerous militaries in the country (e.g. South 2008; Callahan 2007; Smith 1991). What Martin Smith (2007) has called Myanmar's "ethnic strife" has become nearly synonymous with politics in the country, particularly across the former Frontier Areas. Questions around ethnicity are equally present across academic discussions, media representations, and local popular analyses. Certainly for the Kachin with whom I worked throughout my fieldwork, ethnic identification and self-preservation constituted the locus through which daily life acquired much of its meaning.[6] Nowhere was this truer than in school-related work where both distant visions and present grievances drew heavily from ethno-nationalist identification. Consequently, thinking about and through ethnicity came to occupy a central problem in my own work. In order to contextualise my use of the concept, and questions that emerge from it, I shall look at some of the ways anthropologists have addressed ethnicity in the past.[7]

6 In referring to ethnic identification, I am following the usage by Véronique Bénéï who notes that the concept lays a greater emphasis on „processual agency of social actors" over the more essentialising term identity (2008, 3). This is in line with my treatment of ethnicity as both self-ascriptive and open to structural forces (see below). Whenever using the term identity, I am deliberately referring essentialised local conceptions of certain, traits or qualities.

7 Ethnographic literature on ethnic politics and minority relations has grown tremendously over the past two decades. The following selection is representative though by no means exhaustive. For an excellent general

In 1969, Fredrik Barth and colleagues composed a landmark study titled *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. As the title suggests, the symposium headed by Barth placed theoretic emphasis on the boundaries that demarcate and distinguish ethnic groups, and the processes involved in their maintenance. One of the early innovations of their approach was to shift emphasis away from shared culture and to treat the latter as a "result", rather than a "definitional characteristic of ethnic group organisation" (Barth 1998 [1969], 11). They further analysed the content of ethnic dichotomies and proposed that the latter principally fall into two categories: overt signs, such as language or house-form, and basic value orientations or standards for morality and excellence. For the symposium, belonging to an ethnic category implied both specific personal characteristics as well as claims "to be judged, and to judge oneself" by the aforementioned standards (ibid., 14). In other words, against the academic conventions of his contemporaries, Barth insisted that ethnic groups must essentially be defined from within. This emphasis has not lost its import today. As I will show in Chapter 3, for example, ethnicity among my Kachin informants was perceived as necessarily autonomous from – and often conflicting with – the classificatory practices of the Myanmar's state bureaucracy. Barthian perspective beckons one to look beyond the given categories, usually ascribed by formalising and normative apparatuses (e.g. the census, school and media). Yet by itself, the theory fails to account for how such formalisations are internalised, resisted and reinterpreted by any given group. By overtly emphasising self-ascription and individual behaviour, the Barthian analytical lens remains essentially subjectivist.

While identities such as the Kachin, Lisu or Rawang have always had a self-ascriptive dimension, and are perceived as such by most of those subscribing to them, external institutional forces have also influenced their nature and mediated their effects in social relations. Contemporary notions of a common Christian identity as an essential part of being a Kachin are just one example of such a historical process. Chapters 6 and 7 will show that this contemporary view owes

overview of anthropological studies of ethnicity, see (Eriksen 2002); for ethnicity in Southeast Asia, see (Culas and Robinne 2009); (Michaud and Ovesen 2000); (Brown 2003); for Myanmar see (South 2008; Callahan 2007; Smith 2007; Smith 1991; Kunstadter et al 1967)

much to both early missionary schooling and subsequent consolidation of Kachin Christian organisations. Showing the influence of external institutional forces in an even longer historical perspective, James Scott has argued that ethnic identities in the Southeast Asian uplands tended to promulgate with frequent migration and splitting within groups, on the one hand, and the resulting re-adaptations to different ecological zones, on the other (Scott 2010, 136). Whether in flight, capture or trade, the identities of tribal communities vis-à-vis other groups have commonly been influenced by external institutions. Mandy Sadan's work on the Kachin (2013), relying on more substantiated historical data, confirms these earlier hypotheses with numerous examples that I engage with throughout this thesis.

In a similar vein, Thomas Eriksen has rightly criticised Barthian theory for neglecting historical processes and failing to explain how "initially homogenous groups are historically split into two or several distinct ethnic groups" (2002, 79). No less important, particularly in the context of complex multi-ethnic societies, are the opposite processes of integration and assimilation. Historically, these processes have been closely related to the rise of popular nationalism (see, for example, Balcells 2013; Chilosi 2007). Apparatuses of the state, not least that of formal schooling, can and do create enduring ethnic identities out of radically heterogeneous groupings, moulding, in the words of Brackette Williams, "putative homogeneity out of heterogeneity" (1989, 439). This brings me to the problem of statecraft.

Both political science and conflict studies have traditionally taken a more primordialist approach to ethnic identities (see Stack 1986; Stack and Hebron 1999). These identities are seen as deeply rooted in linguistic, cultural or even genetic makeup of groups and societies. Viewed as essentially static and unchanging, these mutually exclusive natures are then taken as prime determinants in inter-group violence and repressions. As noted by David Brown, this line of argument fixes ethnic affiliation not only in ascriptive terms but also takes it as a "conceptual given from which political analysis must begin"(Brown 2003, xi).

The primordialist approach is often synthesised with the idea of "plural society" that was originally developed in the Southeast Asian context by J.S. Furnivall (1948) It has found most use in studies of transitory or weak states with high religious,

linguistic or racial diversity, such as the Balkans or Central Asia's Ferghana Valley. The field of *konfliktologiia,* originating from the post-Soviet context, is perhaps its clearest expression (see Reeves 2005). According to this strand of thought, insofar as a society encompasses a multitude of disparate ethnic groups whose political claims follow the Barthian boundaries, any attempt at inclusive governance tends to lead, in time, to disintegration and conflict (Abazov 1999). The more accommodating the political organisation in such societies – Furnivall and his followers originally drew upon the British West Indies – the harder it will be for the governing elite to maintain social cohesion through democratic non-violent means. Hence, to avoid inter-ethnic conflict, governments are driven to employ increasingly authoritarian measures (Brown 2003, xii).

A different, somewhat subtler approach has been adapted by scholars studying ethnicity as a political resource, invoked in response to particular political exigencies (Cohen 1981). Here ethnicity is seen as a latent potentiality, by no means a static or determinant trait. Rather, the extent to which the latter affects social relationships is determined by the nature of these very relationships and the prevailing historical conditions. Though inherently personal, this identity can be tapped into for political mobilisation by elites. Initially developed to show that ethnicity is something deeply historical and susceptible to external control, this situationalist approach provides a more nuanced understanding of ethnicity in relation to political phenomena, including communal and state violence (Das 2007; Pelkmans 2006; Megoran 2006; Tishkov 1995). It is also well suited for looking at historical moments in comparative perspective. In the Kachin context, this approach has been particularly illuminating in the work of Sadan who shows, for example, how

> *an assertive Kachin Christian nationalist mission proliferated at a time when the political and economic dynamics of conflict had … weakened the social domain in which a different construction of the non-Christian past was embedded* (Sadan 2013, 402).

Among contemporary urbanised population, Christian identity has become practically interchangeable with being Kachin, and Christian organisations

command unprecedented authority in public affairs. From the perspective of the present work, this becomes particularly relevant when looking at the lasting influence of religious elites in the sphere of schooling in Chapter 7 and how a younger generation of school leaders negotiate this in pursuit of their own visions of ethno-national development analysed in Chapter 2. In so doing, the private educators in question are taking advantage of the changing geopolitical and economic environments of contemporary Myanmar, as well as new forms of social capital available to them, in order to redefine the registers through which collective aspirations and identities can be envisioned.

There has been some recoil in recent years against the primacy in Andersonian analyses (B. Anderson 2006) of modernity and colonial powers in shaping (or creating) ethnic politics in Southeast Asia. Frank Proschan (2001), for example, sets out against what he calls the "appendency theory" of ethnicity. Employing the oral myths of the Kmhmu, Proschan seeks evidence "to contradict the prevalent assumption that the colonial enterprise created an epistemic rupture, a la Foucault, bringing ethnic groups into existence *de novo* and *ex nihilo*" (2001, 1001).[8] Although exaggerated in his reading of the epistemic rupture, Proschan offers a compelling argument to the effect that the traditional "hierarchical organisation of difference" based on corporeal and cultural distinction shares a "basic morphology" with the contemporary conceptions of ethnicity (ibid., 1015).

In reference to modernity, Proschan's arguments beg the question to what extent the pre-colonial states in Southeast Asia tapped into ethnic denominators in political affairs. Arguing against what was still the dominant paradigm in the late 1970s in historical writings of pre-colonial Southeast Asia, Victor Lieberman contends that "racial" or "national" categories were neither empirically identifiable nor mutually exclusive. Furthermore, even when these categories were evoked in conflicts, they were far from primary, let alone the only determinants of political allegiance (1978, 456). To bring just one example, the founder of the Konbaung dynasty, King Alaunghpaya (1714-1760), was perhaps the greatest unifying monarch of the Burmese classical period. Though a great universalist, Lieberman argues, the king's

8 A stateless people living in the upland regions of Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

surviving letters and edicts reveal only fractional reference to the Burmese or the Shans. Even when appeals were made on these grounds, ethnicity remained "subordinate to more traditional and universal themes of religious veneration and personal patronage" (1978, 474). In the case of highland tribal populations, Leach's discussion on the norms around slavery among the Kachin through the 19th and early 20th centuries suggests that ethnic boundaries remained both fluid and subject to dominant markers of social structure such as kinship (Leach 1954, 160–161).

Setting historical analysis against the screen of modernity, Lieberman concludes that with the advent of Burmese independence and the crystallisation of heterogeneous but congeneric ethno-nationalist movements across the country, both the meaning and use of ethnicity did change significantly (Lieberman 1978, 480). This is in line with the argument advanced by Charles Keyes who locates the rise of "scientific ethnicity" in Southeast Asia in the late 1950s, arguing that what differentiated this from earlier conceptions based in myth is the predication that ethnic differences could be determined through a novel, positivist method (2002, 1164). This is where Proschan errs in his denial of an epistemic shift. For with the emergence of modernising state institutions in Southeast Asia, it was precisely the episteme in Foucauldian sense (1980, 197) that underwent significant alteration.[9] Notions around personhood, community and territory gradually began assuming their modernist connotations, appropriating and transforming existing geographical, historical and religious imaginaries (Keyes 2002, 1174; see also Schober 2007; Winichakul 1994).

This is not to suggest that novel modes of classification founded on positivist epistemologies were necessarily more valid – or perceived as such – than what had come before. One only needs to look at the practice of census, eagerly employed by most modernising states, to see that claims to verifiable methods were often little more than ideological ornaments, used to legitimise particular statist ideologies. In her historical study of statecraft in the Russian Empires, Francine Hirsch has argued

9 In fact, this epistemic sphere was one of the central grounds of resistance to early British encroachment. The new geographical imagination, premised upon a land survey of the Kingdom of Ava completed by the British in 1826, for example, was essentially incompatible with locally dominant cosmologies. This can be illustrated by the unexpectedly fierce resistance against implementing drawing and geography in monastic schools (Schober 2007, 61; Winichakul 1994).

to this effect by showing how the methods of early ethnologists that were employed by the Soviets to territorialise heterogeneous populations were in practice both value-laden and often arbitrary (2005). As I will show in more detail in Chapter 3, Myanmar has currently classified its population into 135 national races. This number and the institutions such as the census that seek to impose it are fiercely contested on political grounds. In this contestation, the Kachin and other ethnic nationality elites employ local readings of history often at odds with the national ideologies of Myanmar, in order to assert their right to self-determination and protection. In other words, new techniques for ethnic classification have not always resulted in ethnic identification.

Hence my contention, employed throughout this thesis, that rather than discarding the older Barthian paradigm, it is more fruitful to look at ethnic identification through tensions between self-ascription and institutional appropriation. In view of self-representations produced in the everyday and how these representations have been shaped by historical processes, Proschan (2001) is right in that Kachin ethnic identification cannot be reduced to colonial legacies alone (see also Sadan 2013; Robinne and Sadan 2007). Yet its present modalities were certainly influenced by those legacies, just as they were shaped by missionary encounters, nationalist ideas circulating in the university campuses of pre- and post-independence Burma, and so forth. A significant role was also played by the geopolitical forces shaping the region through its turbulent recent history. In other words, Kachin ethnic identification today can neither be reduced to nor separated from the political and religious institutions that historically appropriated and accommodated it. In the contemporary Kachin State, ethno-nationalist ideologies and ethnic identification continue to act both as drivers of and resources for change. In the chapters that follow, I am looking at ethnicity as an integral part of geographical imaginaries, religious sentiments, and visions of national development, arguing that any reading of the present day Kachin State must inevitably engage with its complexities. As already noted, the present work does so in the context of formal education. I now turn to consider existing theories of education in social anthropology and related disciplines in order to outline the basic theoretical premises employed throughout this thesis.

Anthropology and education

It is a matter of some curiosity that social anthropology would overlook formal education for such a long time, particularly since studies of generative social principles, life-cycles and initiation rites in traditional societies have a long history in ethnographic writing. Historically, Margaret Mead's (2001 [1928]) work on psychosexual development in Samoan adolescents brought a number of important issues relating to socialisation and youth into comparative focus. In continental Europe, Arnold Van Gennep (Gennep 2013 [1909]) established the notion of *rites de passage*s, marking a person's transformation through life-cycles and social roles within the biological density of birth, maturity and death. Gennep's theories, particularly the concept of liminality, were taken up by Victor Turner to account for both the sacred and profane aspects of gradual socialisation. Turner himself appropriated the Latin term "communitas" to convey the symbolic bonding effectuated by social rituals of inclusion and exclusion, the dialectical experience of different poles of hierarchical structures (1974, 96). Yet the analytical transition from these fundamental processes of socialisation to modern institutionalised pedagogy took a long time to materialise.

Even ethnographies of the nation-state that emerged in the 1970s continued to shy away from engaging the subject of formal schooling, particularly outside the Western context. For a long time, the study of the institutions of formal schooling was left to political scientists, economists, policy planners and sociologists who first advanced theories of social reproduction and discrimination. This had at least three consequences for the theory. One, the regional focus remained largely on the Western industrial societies, concentrating on individual nation-states as bounded units. Second, it studied complex, industrialised societies with sizeable populations and developed capitalist economies. And finally, the scholarship privileged positivist epistemologies and quantitative methods. This left out a number of important issues anthropologists normally brought to the table, particularly the extension of the subject area to colonial and post-colonial worlds of emergent nation-states and their relations to traditional social orders. The early Leachian oversight that had failed, in his published works, to scrutinise the link between his

contemporary processes of colonial interaction and the traditional societies he was studying, thus continued to characterise the field for decades.

Some of the most important early critiques of formal mass schooling emerged from the Marxist tradition, particularly through reconceptualisation of the idea of reproduction. In opposition to the classic Deweyan (1998) approach to education that saw schools as principal sites of transmission and development, critiques emerging in the 1970s stressed that educational institutions not only work to disseminate knowledge in society but also help perpetuate, and often deepen, existing inequalities, dependencies and class divisions (B. A. Levinson, Foley, and Holland 1996). The resulting epistemological shift opened up a number of lucrative paths of inquiry.

The work of philosopher Louis Althusser has had lasting influence, if not always acknowledged, on later theorists, among them a leading contemporary scholar of Burmese education, Zar Ni (1998). Althusser famously advanced a thesis whereby the system of formal education constituted the principal "ideological State apparatus" in modern capitalist states (Althusser 1971, 152). Having replaced the dominant social position of organised religion that Althusser mistakenly treated as an obsolete ideological horizon, schooling emerged as the chief mediator between the individual and his or her social conditions. Not only would this condition be transfigured through the dominant state ideology, but the very "know-how", the practical skills acquired in preparation for professional life, would serve to reproduce the existing stratification between social classes (ibid.: 134). Having skills to labour at the forge would destine one to the mould, so to speak, but also legitimate and perpetuate such divisions of labour in society by making them look both natural and necessary. Another reason why Althusser saw in schools the central apparatus of state ideology is that they functioned quietly – an observation that was to gain more analytical purchase in Foucault's philosophy of *assujettissement* or subjectification (see below).[10] Yet already for Althusser, ideology and subject were necessarily constitutive of one another (ibid.: 172). This dialectic informed his reading of the role of schools in the formation of the ideologically-

10 For a critical evaluation of the concept of subjectification in the English language see (Milchman and Rosenberg 2007).

determined structures of class domination and individual consciousness – a point of significant controversy for a number of later theorists.

Among them, Paul Willis (1977), another neo-Marxist thinker, forcefully argued against the Althusserian primacy of impenetrable ideology. In his study of the schooling of working-class "lads" in Hammertown, Willis not only showed, pace Althusser, that the cultural context from which the lads came disposed them towards like paths in life, but that there was more to ideology than reproduction. Far from being uniformly repressive or determined, the reproductive apparatus contains, in Willis' verbiage, "deep dysfunctions and desperate tensions" (1977, 175). The latter emerge not from structural malfunctions but from social agency. It is precisely because the lads perceived the empty façade of educational ideals that they formed a counter-culture sealing, ironically, their future as manual labourers. Yet despite its apparent confirmation of reproduction theory, the value of Willis' ethnography is quite the opposite. It shows, rather, that the earlier Marxist readings of ideology in service of a repressive state remained too simplified. In the contemporary Kachin areas, the highly nuanced political realities and their historical effects on formal schooling confirm a need for more expansive conceptual language and empirical focus. For example, following Willis' focus, one might ask to what extent the political ideologies of Kachin youth influence their academic performance within a Burmanized apparatus of schooling. Such questioning will help us better to account for regional particularities, disparate and often conflicting ideologies, and the role of individual agency.

Willis' work also pointed towards a larger sociological debate on the primacy of conscious experience over social structures. The said controversy forms a starting point for what is probably the most comprehensive study of the politics of schooling in Socialist Burma by Zar Ni (1998). Written under the supervision of a leading Marxist sociologist of education, Michael W. Apple, the work argues that schooling constituted the single most important institution through which the Burmese Socialist Programmeme Party (BSPP) sought to legitimate its rule from 1962 through 1988. Its essential project of producing "a new social order" depended on the regime's ability to draw "on the indigenous sources of culture and socialist ideology", which were then inculcated through curriculum (Zar Ni 1998, 11). In an

attempt to merge Buddhist existentialism with the contemporary critical theory, Zar Ni brings up the famous debate between Raymond Williams (1994) and Stuart Hall (1980). In this conversation, Williams argued for a more experiential analysis of cultural phenomena, whereas the Hall insisted, echoing Althusser, that individuals only live the conditions of their existence through existing "classifications and frameworks of the culture" (Hall in Zar Ni 1998, 14). While employing Williams' notion that "tradition", evoked by the ideologues of BSPP, was essentially "selective" (1994, 601), Zar Ni ultimately sides with Hall in asserting that individual thought does not "reflect reality but is articulated on and appropriates it" (1998, 15). His analysis thus remains a cartography of ideologies, where resistance is only an effect of various counter-hegemonic discourses opposed to the monopolistic exercise of power by the ruling regime (Zar Ni 1998, 286–287)

In the Kachin context, my critique of Zar Ni's work is that its focus is rather narrowly directed at the formal exercise of power through governmental policies. The concept of ideology in Zar Ni remains limited, glossing over individual interpretations and meanings. While the authoritarian means of successive governments in Myanmar must not be underestimated, I agree with Jasmin Lorch when she argues in reference to the former State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) that "the rigidity of the regime's educational policies" seldom "reflect the reality on the ground" (Lorch 2008). This is particularly true in regions like the Kachin State where, as I argue in Chapter 3, the legitimacy of the central state remains highly contested and its infrastructure lags even further behind regional neighbours than that of lower Myanmar. Thus, the present work seeks to build on Zar Ni's earlier insights but also pay close attention to the local effects and perceptions of Nay Pyi Daw's central policies.

In short, one can hardly deduce the full logic of pedagogic practice from the officially prescribed rules, no matter how assertive or detailed these may be. In answering the above controversy, I shall rely more on the formulation by Pierre Bourdieu (1990), who sought the principle of practice (e.g. of pedagogic activity) "in the relationship between external constraints which leave a very variable margin for choice, and dispositions which are the product of economic and social processes" (i.e. the *habitus*) (1990, 50). To evoke Leach whom Bourdieu references on this point,

> *structural systems in which all avenues of social action are narrowly institutionalised are impossible. In all viable systems, there must be an area where the individual is free to make choices so as to manipulate the system to his advantage* (Leach in Bourdieu 1990, 53).

There has been considerable debate about whether Bourdieu's own work (or indeed that of Leach) could properly accommodate individual agency (cf. Reay 2004; R. Nash 1990; Harker 1984). For the present purposes, I want to stress the importance of conflicts and deviations within institutional contexts, not least in the field of education, as analytical tools. As I am arguing in Chapter 2, individual agency remains an important driver of change for institutional practices and discourses around schooling in the Kachin areas, particularly in current conditions of uncertainty and potential institutional realignment. Moreover, the role of agency is all the more central in the Kachin context where personal patronage tends to be the norm across disparate organisational settings, and neither responsibility nor authority is shared willingly by individual leaders.

The ideological function of schooling stands in danger of being overstated or simplified. In his *Social Production of Indifference*, Michael Herzfeld designates the classroom as the original site where the young are led to extend "familial affect and rage to national loyalty" (1992, 32). Similarly, Allen Chun has argued that "education is a kind of policing that mirrors and supports the technologies of power that buttress the state" (2005, 58). While schools often do fill those roles, a growing body of empirical studies has shown that the transference described by Herzfeld often happens at a much earlier stage in socialisation and can evolve quite independently of institutions of state-schooling (Bénéï 2008; Das 2007; Stafford 1992; Malkki 1995). Or again, as Kathrine Bowie's (1997) study of the Village Scout movement in Thailand illustrates, governments can appropriate pedagogic techniques and rituals to manipulate affect in very different institutional settings. The youth training programmes of the Kachin Independence Army that I describe in Chapter 4 are another example. The point is not to argue that political socialisation and subjectification are not some of the key mechanisms of modern schooling. Rather, I am drawing attention to the fact that the institutional landscapes can be

considerably more complex than early critiques of the nation-state suggested. In the case of the present study, the ideological effects of Myanmar education are but one, and certainly not the primary, site at which the Kachin intellectuals with whom I worked acquired their ideological horizons. More to the point, their own practice as private educators on the margins of the state, while still part of formal schooling properly speaking, acted as critique towards those larger institutions and worked to advance radically different social aims.

A crucial oversight of classical Althusserian theory of education remains religion. Rather naively, it assumed that secularism would replace religion as a dominant ideological force in all modern societies. Looking at social realities at the turn of the new millennium, religion remains a potent force in the public arena in countries across different cultural spectrums and continents. In many instances, religious identities have been actively appropriated by state institutions in the service of nationalist ideologies. Even in seemingly unified states such as Turkey, battles are waged in official arenas over different interpretations of multiple pasts and religious identities, not least in curricular form (Kaplan 2006; for a similar argument in Indian context see Bénéï 2008). Historical developments in the Kachin State raise a number of issues in this regard. There has long existed an ideological contest between the Theravada Buddhist *sangha* and smaller Christian communities, such as the Kachin. Within the Kachin society itself, congregational lines separate the Baptists, Catholics and smaller denominations. The last decades have also seen a resurgence of earlier *nat jaw* traditions.[11] This is significant not only from the perspective of local politics but also in educational contexts, as church (and monastic) schools continue to fulfil pedagogic functions (see Lorch 2007). As I am arguing in Chapters 6 and 7, religious socialisation is also inextricably tied to ethno-nationalist projects of statecraft. The fact that the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) has long been the only public organisation able to stand up to state authorities in Myitkyina raises important questions by itself. As far as contemporary Myanmar is concerned, it would thus be misleading to assume that religious institutions have somehow lost out to state-schooling and secular ideologies. Rather, new connections between these fields have

11 For a detailed ethnological analysis of *nat* worship among the Kachin tribes see Leach 1954, 172-182; Hanson 1913, Ch 13

emerged within the context of modernity appropriating traditional social orders. To account for some of these processes, I would like to consider the work of Michel Foucault whose thought often trails in the wake of Althusser's.

Conceptualising pedagogy

Throughout their careers, both Foucault and Althusser were bent on finding a language to describe heterogeneous institutions of the modern state and how the latter appropriated social life and individual consciousness. As noted above, Althusser was the first to (re)introduce the concept of apparatus to theorise the existence and logic of both symbolic and material structures of the state. He saw the latter as fulfilling two respective functions: those of ideology and repression.[12] Michel Foucault, whose concerns lay more with self-discipline and control, expanded on this concept not so much through explicit definition but by example of his own works on historical genealogy of various modern institutions. His published work seldom touches on the modern school *per se*. Yet from his interest in the technologies of self (1998), through the successive rise of regimes of discipline and control (1991; 2001a) and the corresponding epistemic formations (2002; 2001b), Foucault's thought rarely loses sight of the pedagogical.

Similarly to Althusser, the concept of apparatus (*dispositif*) first appears in Foucault to examine various institutions associated with modernity, such as the prison or the mental clinic. However, Gilles Deleuze has noted that the majority of Foucault's oeuvre can, in fact, be read as an "analysis of concrete social apparatuses" (1991, 159). Yet while the concept appeared with increasing frequency in his work from the mid-1970s until Foucault's untimely death in 1984, he never elabourated its meaning concisely. The only time Foucault came close to a definition of "apparatus" was in an interview dating from 1977, and can be summed up as follows. The "heterogeneous set" that comprises an apparatus can include discourses, institutions, architectural forms, administrative and police measures, moral propositions, etc. The apparatus itself is "the network" that can be established

12 The concept of apparatus itself actually originates from the film theory of Jean-Louis Baudry (2004a [1970]; 2004b [1975]), where the author uses it to analyse the relationship between ideology and cinema as a social institution. I owe this insight to Olga Bryukhovetska.

between these elements. Its strategic function is to respond to an exigency. It manipulates the relations of forces within which it is always located (in order to develop, block, stabilise or utilise them). Lastly, the apparatus necessarily remains inseparable from the limits of knowledge that "arise from it" and "condition it" (cited in Agamben 2009, 2).[13]

Apparatus thus offers a multi-faceted tool for thinking about the institutions of formal schooling in a context of multiple competing sovereignties, networks of religious and secular organisations, and trans-border connections. Importantly, it helps to transcend the overly state-centric perspective on formal education employed by Marxist critique. What Diane Reay has argued for Bourdieu's concept of habitus captures my approach well. "Paradoxically, the conceptual looseness of habitus also constitutes a potential strength. It makes possible adaptation rather than the more constricting straightforward adoption of the concept within empirical work" (Reay 1995, 357).

What would this mean in educational contexts? As Bénéï reminds us, schooling always exists in dialogue with different layers of society as a whole (2008). On the one hand, schools are localised by virtue of their materiality. But the practices within the spatial constraints thus afforded relate very different social agents and discourses. For example, language policies have exerted critical influence on national schooling throughout both colonial and modern history of Myanmar (Callahan 2003). As I argue throughout this thesis, it would be impossible to understand the choices Kachin activists and educators make in their everyday practice without appreciating the lasting influences of the Christian missions and decades of militarisation. The same perspective applies to considering the moral horizons, daily politics, economic opportunities, and a host of other social factors in the Kachin borderworlds. Limiting the study of formal education to school grounds, let alone the national policy, would risk missing these and other relevant connections. The virtue of the concept of apparatus, as understood by Foucault, lies precisely in its emphasis on heterogeneity of social institutions in the modern states that, in different historical circumstances, form radically different assemblages. This

13 For the original as well as an alternative refinement see (Agamben 2009, 2–3).

concerns both the materiality of the institutions, the discursive formations produced, as well as meanings attributed to them by individual social actors. In a word, what constitutes the field of formal schooling is context-specific, informing not only individual meanings attributed to schools and teaching but also society in general.

T.E. Woronov's work on student "creativity" in the context of Chinese education policy is a good example of how educational debates pervade different social fields even in strongly centralised systems (2008, 401). As part of a wider shift in national policies, the three Beijing elementary schools in Woronov's study were tasked with introducing novel policies prioritizing student creativity over the rigorous rehashing of Confucian classics, something that would have seemed impossible a short time ago. This introduced not only new texts on the subject but very different institutional sets, ranging from professional training profiles to school performances. Complaisant teachers soon found themselves pitted against considerable resistance, including that by parents who felt the central policies could endanger their children's chances of being competitive in their final exams, and even by the children themselves. Woronov shows how the unintended but immediate effects of Beijing's "Education for Quality" went far beyond the controlled settings of classrooms and teachers' offices, affecting how people thought of personal development, themselves, their children and society in general. Discussiing the status hierarchies pervasive in Kachin schooling and their influence on institutional practice in Chapter 5, I am starting from a similar point of departure. The novel paradigm of learner-centred methods, introduced by a disparate set of actors including cross-border NGOs, educational reformers in Myanmar, and individual Kachin educators, have generated tensions whose significance extends well-beyond their didactic utility in classroom interaction. Namely, these tensions have spurred unexpected forms of resistance, while also producing new discourses and practices.

The value of critical theories of social re-production thus lies in showing that formal education operates within and through structures that shape individual and group consciousness. Dominant educational apparatuses in the Kachin State, whose historical significance will be discussed in detail throughout this thesis, have been

instrumental in both religious and political socialisation since their emergence in early 20th century. However, I am also arguing that the paradigm of re-production alone remains insufficient for appreciating key processes in the contemporary educational landscape. Beyond the formal structures, one must also seek an understanding of the lived experience of the people working and studying in schools. Over the past two decades, anthropology of education has become increasingly concerned not only with state projects of socialisation but also the roles and experiences of the social actors involved. Véronique Bénéï's *Schooling Passions* (2008) represents an example of the divergence from earlier positivist epistemologies and structural materialism, while maintaining a clear focus on the relationship between schooling and the state in Western India. Bénéï's concern is essentially with "the emotional and embodied production of the political", arguing that the former represents a crucial facet of statecraft (2008, 5). Her work thus echoes a larger paradigm shift that Bradley Levinson *et al* refer to as "cultural production" (1996). Distancing themselves from structural "interpellation", these authors concentrate instead on "how historical persons are formed in practice, within and against larger societal forces" inherent in institutions such as schools (1996, 14). The emphasis given in my own work to both individual agency and everyday lived realities in the Kachin borderworlds should be read as responding to this emergent corpus of ethnographies of education.

Pedagogic practice is one way through which human agency forms a political relation to the world. Rather than mere vehicle for the transmission of knowledge, formal schooling constitutes a field where different interests and political projects converge and compete in a constant dialectic. In addition to being a potent tool in the hands of dominant elites, however, this field can operate according to a more complex internal logic, and is capable of producing discourses and practices in unexpected configurations. The way the younger generation of Kachin educators is currently experimenting with novel ways of thinking about their daily practice and national development more generally is a crucial example of this.

Christianity and modernity

Finally, I would like to consider anthropology's theoretical engagement with

Christianity. As with formal schooling, ethnographies committed to Christianity per se came around only relatively recently. More so than the former case, ethnographic engagement with Christianity has been rife with tensions both conscious and hidden (Cannell 2006, Hann, 2007). Over the last two decades, this uneasy relationship has seen important re-evaluation. A key factor has undoubtedly been the resilience and growth of Christianity across the global South that critical scholarship is only beginning to appreciate in its totality (Robbins & Engelke 2010). For the purposes of the present work, debates within this corpus hold particular relevance in their engagement with modernity.

It has been noted that early anthropologists labouring in the colonial settings commonly perceived Christianity as an "alien intrusion" propagated by zealous missionaries undermining local cosmologies and social systems (Hann 2007, 384). Leach's work among the Kachin is a prominent example of salvage anthropology striving to record a supposedly disappearing culture. Though his published work deliberately glosses over the issue, Leach's 1947 dissertation assesses the outcomes of missionary contact in consistently negative light (e.g. 1947, 624). When ethnographers did engage with Christian groups and practices, the latter largely served as secondary objects of analysis. Conversion and worship were taken to be a symptomatic of underlying social and economic causes, often stemming from colonial encounters and uncertainties of modernity (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff 1997). Conversely, ethnographies of Europe and the Americas perceived Christian groups as "inappropriately religious" cultural Others of secularized societies (Harding 1991, 375; Howell 2007). At one extreme, Christianity appeared as an active agent of irrevocable and inherently problematic change, at the other, it was perceived as a reactionary force against progressive humanist ideals of a secular present.

It has been argued that part of the difficulty comes from the fact that Christianity has long existed in "critical dialogue with the modernist ideas" that underpin those central to anthropological discourse itself (Robbing 2003, 192). The discipline found itself at once repelled by and uncannily close to discursive formations within Christianity. Talal Asad (1993) famously suggested that the very concepts of religion

and ritual employed by anthropologists might owe their discursive boundaries to Christian tradition, strung between early medieval scholasticism and secularizing tendencies of the Enlightenment. Asad maintains that a universal definition of religion, such as proposed by Clifford Geertz (1973), cannot exist precisely because its constituent elements are products of historically situated discursive processes (Asad 1993, 29). As I will show in Chapter 7, this insight is relevant in the Kachin context because the genealogies of ethno-nationalist thought and Christianisation are often closely intertwined. To be sure, they are not reducible to one another and always exist within a larger cosmology of ideas that include customary law, kinship traditions, pre-Christian spirit worship, and militarism. Yet historical affinities between Christianity and nationalism, including the technologies and institutions dedicated to their dissemination (such as print media, schools and congregations), suggest that entirely extracting one from the other might distort lived experience of contemporary Kachin Christians.

It has also been suggested that certain fundamental dichotomies within the Judeo-Christian doctrine share links with those of modernity. In his classic re-evaluation of Maussian gift, Jonathan Parry suggests that the transcendent ideal, which placed the true self beyond the material world, also foregrounded the "separation of persons from things which is an ideological precondition of market exchange" (1986, 468; *cf* Coleman 2006, 179-180). In this framework, modernity is propelled as much by Judeo-Christian semantics of transcendence as it is by the Protestant ethics (Weber 2001). One Christian ritual that resonates with ideologies of modernity is conversion. As an act of symbolic rebirth, it not only suggests a new religious existence but a radical rupture with traditional past (Lampe 2010, 80-81). That conversion can have implications beyond the spiritual will be shown in the analysis of American Baptist missionary sources in the final chapter of this thesis. Whether explicitly or otherwise, evangelisation among the Kachin aimed at development in a wider sense. Its appeal among the Kachin tribes, who were fast becoming aware of changes brought by colonial encounters, was significant. Alongside the Christian message of salvation, people were attuned to institutions of schooling with their promise of material gain through employment and trade; the colonial army with its own symbols of advancement; and new forms of trans-local imagined communities.

Conversion offered a way to orient oneself in this novel cosmology.

One should, of course, be mindful of making uncritical assumptions of Christianity's modernizing tendencies. Fenella Cannell rightly cautions against neo-Weberian arguments modeled upon the historical links between Christianity and modernity in the West. Predictions that identical developments will occur everywhere are flawed, originating in the "ideology of modernity itself" (2006, 32-33). For example, while Christian claims of individual redemption might erode collective social organization in one context, there are plenty of examples – including the Kachin – where communal identities are strengthened. Leach himself predicted that the American creed of the Baptist mission would privilege the individual while eroding the communal (1947, 629-630). That commitment to community appears today the principal form of Kachin Baptist worship illustrates the need to appreciate local trajectories over preconceived notions of what constitutes Christian experience (Cannell 2006, 29). For the present analysis, this poses the question as to what extent one can justifiably speak of Kachin Christian organizations as agents of modernity.

Danilyn Rutherford's example of the Protestant Biak in Papua shows the importance of empirical analysis of multiple perspectives, not least in colonial and post-colonial settings. The 19th century Dutch missionaries labouring among the islanders interpreted the collective burnings of ancestral carvings as renunciation of heathen worship. However, within the Biak cosmology, Rutherford maintains, the ritual was less about leaving the old world for the gospel than appropriating the latter for the former. The outward transformation of local islanders into the modern subjects of church and state might have been true in many cases. But Rutherford's reading suggests it was only a partial truth. The Word came to embody the powers within the very mythology the missionaries had sought to usurp. Ultimately, the case of Biaks illustrates multiple, potentially conflicting subject positions within the process of religious conversion. However, rather than refuting links between Christianity and modernity, Rutherford's study suggests that these links remain non-deterministic, context specific, and open to varying interpretations.

This resonates with a larger corpus of ethnographies that emphasize local modalities of Christian practice (e.g. Bandek and Jorgensen 2012). My own work in the Kachin

State partly confirms the openness paradigm. On the one hand, Kachin Christianity remains heterogeneous both in its denominational structures and theological debates. Even outwardly monolithic organizations such as the Kachin Baptist Convention betray lively debate around interpretation of scriptures and local politics. Likewise, I maintain that it is unhelpful to see contemporary Kachin Christianity as a mere colonial imposition. Doing so overlooks the fact that, since the early decades of the 20th century, most evangelical work has been led by the Kachin (for a similar argument on Papua New Guinea see Barker in Whitehouse 2006, 297). Throughout the urbanised areas where I conducted my fieldwork, religious belonging is today a crucial existential marker.

This brings me to consider the ways in which Christianity in Kachinland *can* be made sense of in certain registers of modernity.[14] Many effects of evangelical missions, such as emphasis on textuality over oral tradition, privileging of formal education, and active construction of trans-local collective identities mirror modernizing processes described in other Southeast Asian contexts such as Melanesia (Whitehouse 2006). Both Kachin church leaders and their congregations commonly employ the language of modernity to make sense of their practice and goals. In Cannell's terms, religious worship would often be discussed as a marker of "being modern" (2006, 34). The emergence of critical voices in contemporary Kachin society contesting clerical claims to progress (see Chapter 2) and as well as earlier anxieties about the realities of modernity (see Chapter 7) merely confirm the historical claim of Christian organizations. In discussing secular politics' relation to Islam, Asad has noted that "Islamism's preoccupation with state power is the result not of its commitment to nationalist ideas but of the modern nation-state's enforced

14 Here as elsewhere, I am using the word Kachinland to refer to an area roughly overlapping with the administrative boundaries of Myanmar's Kachin State and the northern parts of Shan State. Insofar as the people I worked with were increasingly employing the term Kachinland to emphasise their political stance, I have chosen to include it in my own narrative. It denotes areas controlled by KIO, smaller armed groups, as well as the Burmese central government irrespecitive of their current sovereign status. While lacking a legal correlate in international discourse, Kachinland is nonetheless a highly invested term for the local Kachin communities seeking an alternative to the official designation of Kachin State. In large part, it is precisely because the latter is employed officially by the Myanmar government that Kachinland has gained prominence it has in popular usage. It also correlates more closely with *Jinghpaw Wunpawng Mungdan*, literally Jinghpaw community land, that is at the centre of ethno-nationalist ideology.

claim to constitute legitimate social identities and arenas (2003, 200). Likewise, contemporary Kachin debates over national development and the authority of religious elites evolved within a historical context where churches saw themselves as, and were perceived to be, legitimate agents of modernity.

Finally, I should like to acknowledge my debt to what is probably the single most important volume published on the subject of Kachin society and culture, Mandy Sadan's *Being and Becoming Kachin* (2013). Over the course of writing this thesis, I found myself drawn into ever-closer dialogue with this Sadan's work. Even if not always explicitly stated, its breadth of historical knowledge and analytic became an inspiration and a counterpoint to my own more modest aims. Had it seen publication at the start of my fieldwork, a few years before it actually did, there is no doubt that it would have altered my own approach to the subject matter. As it stands, my own findings will have to complement Sadan's more complete account from two perspectives that are only marginally present in her analysis: formal schooling and Christian organisations.

On the whole, *Being and Becoming Kachin* is empirically driven, rather than theory building. Sadan's main focus is on understanding how contemporary ideologies of being Kachin have emerged out of historical experience (2013, 12-13). Crucially, Sadan recognizes the shifting and heterogeneous nature of being Kachin that is open to different articulations over time and place. While this perspective itself is hardly novel, no other work on the Kachin provides a comparable breadth of empirical and historical material to support its thesis. Sadan's analysis spans the late eighteenth century until the present day. Geographically, the work traverses multiple national boundaries from Assam to Kachinland to Yunnan, while paying attention to how these were always embedded within wider "global and regional histories" (ibid.). While the book follows multiple paths of inquiry, its main argument is that contemporary ethno-nationalist identities, and political institutions central to them, were not colonial era constructs imposed from the outside. Rather, they have been and continue to be generated locally in response to their changing historical conditions.

Sadan's other aim is disentangling the politics of Kachin identities from their

contemporary Christian manifestations. She argues that the ideology of pan-Kachin identity, that today has found its principal expression in Jinghpaw Wunpawng nationalism, pre-dates the era of active Christianisation. The period of 1878-1915, for example, saw significant interactions between the Kachin elites and agents of the colonial state, and resulted in multiple negotiations around boundaries. This is an important argument for it overturns the causal assumptions of the religious basis of subsequent armed conflicts. Rather, Sadan suggests, these earliest attempts at creating trans-local identities arose out of colonial and geopolitical pressure that drew concerted response from the local chiefdoms. In the period immediately leading up to the Second World War and the decades of instability that followed, Sadan sees Christianisation as a response to political and armed conflict. This is the principal area where my own work diverges from hers. Sadan's engagement with Kachin traditional culture and its revival movements are expertly nuanced. At the same time, she largely dismisses their Christian modalities as objects of analysis for their own sake. I agree that Kachin ethno-nationalism cannot be reduced to specifically Christian identities. But given the present position of Christian organizations in the Kachin society, and the number of committed Christians among civil society activist, educators, and intellectuals, I find that Sadan's marginalization of local Christian life worlds does disservice to both historical and contemporary complexities.

In a recent volume, Cannell has noted that in understanding Christian experience, it can be counterproductive "to treat Christianity as simply a secondary phenomenon of underlying political or economic change" (2006, 29). The point is not to deny the influence of structural factors to social phenomena such as conversion. However, I maintain that what it means to be a Christian – or belong to a Christian community – in contemporary Kachinland, cannot be reduced to historical factors that supported conversion. Nor are the latter particularly helpful in describing how identification with particular Christian cosmologies influences people's choices and aspirations. In purely temporal terms, one might encounter political or economic changes in society only after they become or recognize themselves as Christians. It can be useful to analyse Christianisation as a response to structural factors such as capitalist modernity or violent conflicts, especially during times of social change.

However, following Andreas Bandak and Jonas Jørgensen (2012), one could also treat Christian faith and cosmology as the foreground from which changes acquire meanings. Or to put it in another way, in addition to tracing the paths individuals and communities have taken to become Christians, one could also inquire about how they experience their present condition and why they make the choices they do. In shifting my focus to the experiences of Kachin Christians and organisations, my aim is to complement, ethnographically as well as historically, the existing work of Sadan and other Kachin scholars. By privileging groups and perspectives that have been of secondary interest to much of secular scholarship, I am thus following Sadan's own call for "listening and engagement" with peripheries in order to bring out further nuances in local politics, institutions, and identities (2013, 458).

A few preliminary words should also be said on the terminology used throughout this thesis. First, studies of schooling generally differentiate between *education* as a general practice for the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, and its *formal* institutionalised forms. A classic formulation set out by Philip H. Coombe and Manzoor Ahmed (1974) treats *informal* education as a lifelong process by which people acquire "knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experience and exposure to the environment". This is differentiated from *formal education* as an "institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured 'education system,' spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university". *Nonformal* education occupies the manifold spaces between them, being programmatic and organised but conducted outside the formal, traditionally state-sanctioned systems to target specific subgroups of the population (ibid., 8). This threefold distinction originally aided development interventions in contexts where, for example, state-schooling was failing to meet its targets or discriminated against certain groups or classes in the society. In describing existing education apparatuses, however, these analytical distinctions might be better thought of as "predominant modes of learning" or "emphasis" rather than "discrete entities", existing simultaneously in concert and conflict (La Belle 1982, 162). Moreover, anthropologists of education have noted the normative and value-laden qualities of the formal/informal distinction, suggesting alternative, less Eurocentric formulations around intentionality and context (Strauss 1984).

While recognizing these earlier critiques, I have nonetheless chosen to use *formal education* to refer to all forms of institutionalised, classroom-based schooling, regardless of whether they were run by state actors or non-governmental organisations. Wherever I have wanted to distinguish one from the other, I refer to state or non-state-schooling. I find this justified on the grounds that many of the social actors described in this thesis invested significant efforts into building lasting institutional structures that followed existing models of formal education. Moreover, the Myanmar state has either failed in or been denied from extending its central schooling system to large parts of the Kachin State. The separate system run by the KIO, as well as smaller church-based alternatives, constitute the only viable forms of formal schooling for the local populace. It would thus be misleading and unfair to reserve the use of formal schooling for the projects of the central government alone.

In the context of Kachin *private schools* that form the primary subject matter of this thesis, I am referring to them as such to differentiate these initiatives from those administered by the KIO and Myanmar Ministry of Education. When speaking of *educators*, I am generally referring to people engaged in a multifaceted set of pedagogic activities and institutional affiliations in the Kachin areas. These can include teaching for government schools and colleges, private initiatives, church-run classes and camps, as well as giving private tuition. Most Kachin educators discussed in the chapters below have been engaged in a number of these activities during their careers. I thus find my use of terminology helpful in conveying the complex and dynamic institutional relations in the contemporary field of education in Kachinland.

Second, conceptual tools for describing state *borders* have been subject to considerable debate in anthropological literature (see volume edited by Donnan and Wilson 2012). In distinguishing between boundaries, borders, and borderlands, I shall follow the usage employed by Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson (1999). While a *boundary* denotes an imaginary line demarcating state territory, *borders* are used in a wider sense. In addition to boundaries, they comprise of bureaucratic, military and political institutions, as well as various socio-cultural assemblages.

Borderlands are areas loosely defined by their proximity to state boundaries. Recently, Anastasia Piliavsky (2013) has drawn attention to the fact that certain authors tend to overstate the uniqueness of "borderlands" and that identical processes are often at work around internal borders of administrative divisions inside countries. In some respects, Piliavsky's critique holds true in the case of northern Myanmar. For example, during most of 2012, the regional capital of Myitkyina had guarded checkpoints erected after dark, searching every motorised vehicle. However, I maintain that there are also certain economic and political features that are concentrated near international boundaries which do not function in the same manner elsewhere. The current position of the KIO itself, to bring just the most obvious example, would be unthinkable without geopolitical developments that took place throughout the 20th century, linking its territorial claims with cross-border actors in China and India. By using the term *borderworlds* to talk about Kachin areas of Northern Myanmar, I am following the term's use by Mandy Sadan who rightfully states that in the Kachin context, "an awareness that an alternative geography spanning at least three nation states exists creates a distinctive understanding of borders" in local perceptions (2013, 4). Her reliance on the more expansive term borderworld seems to me both justified and insightful.

The third term that forms the basis of one of my main arguments is that of *critique*. I will mainly be using it in the context of institutional practice of private schools in the contemporary Kachin State. I maintain that one of the ways to understand the everyday work of several initiatives I studied is as critique towards state institutions and other dominant organisations in the society. The way I employ this term does not necessarily imply a vocal and systematic critique (e.g. scrutinising a particular policy). At times, the actors in question were indeed explicit in denouncing existing institutions for what they saw as failings. However, their critique could also take implicit forms, particularly when working with some organisations on which they were partly reliant for support, or with whose ideological aims they sympathised. In this latter sense, people might not have criticised those bodies expressly. Yet the very act of establishing an autonomous organisation outside existing structures, whose aims consist of improving certain areas of social development perceived to be inadequate, is a critique in itself. Rather than joining existing organisations, these

people would rather invest their energy and resources into their own visions of development, in this instance through schooling.

Plan of work

The following sections guide the reader through each of the chapters. On the whole, the work counterpoises the contemporary ethnographic observations gathered during my successive visits to the Kachin areas between July 2010 and July 2015 with both primary and secondary historical data. Continuing from the introduction, Chapter 1 on methods and rapport further explicates my theoretical aims and practical constraints that led to the said design. I describe the progression of my research questions from preliminary fieldwork plans through subsequent adaptations as I was forced to navigate the resurgence of armed conflict in 2011. I also provide a detailed description of my field sites, people and organisations with whom I worked, and the highly relevant topics of safety and informant protection.

Having provided an overview of my field and methods, Chapter 2 draws on ethnographic material from several private schools in Myitkyina and Laiza areas to argue that these institutions constitute important sites of critique against existing apparatuses of schooling and governance in the contemporary Myanmar. Education among the ethnic nationalities in Myanmar remains a highly politicised and divisive issue. Looking at the rationale of developing private schools in this context draws attention to important points of tension. One of these is opposition to Nay Pyi Daw's policies of marginalisation and assimilation, as they are perceived by a new generation of intellectual elites and activists. However, important frictions also exist within the more tightly knit Kachin society itself. Through their practice, private educators described here are trying to address both, while advocating new paradigms of organisational practices and values. This involves complex negotiation of national and religious allegiances, while working towards particular visions of development for the Kachin society defined in ethno-nationalist terms. One of the principal aims of this thesis is showing that, rather than being mere symptoms of unresolvable conflict and grievances, these processes can also be productive, leading to new institutional formations and debates within the Kachin society and Myanmar as a whole.

Chapter 3 will start unpicking the political context of the emergence of Kachin private schools by looking at the territorial fragmentation of contemporary Kachin State. Using insights from recent ethnographies of the state (Hansen and Stepputat, 2005), the chapter argues that state sovereignty in northern Myanmar should be understood as an aspiration of numerous political actors, rather than the privileged function of a single unified state. Territorially fragmented and institutionally crippled, the Kachin State remains subject to central policies aimed at marginalising ethnic nationalities both politically and economically. Through a permanent state of exception, justified on the grounds of on-going armed conflict, the governing political elites have long benefitted from lucrative shadow economies while failing to meet most popular grievances. To illustrate this state of affairs, I describe documentary practices affecting several ethnic nationality students enrolled at private schools with which I worked, as well as tensions around local infrastructure and techniques of governance such as the census. Data presented in this chapter will help the reader appreciate some of the forms of physical and structural violence prevailing in the Kachin borderworlds today, and how these conditions have shaped developmental aims of people and organisations described in this thesis. Importantly, the data also suggests how the central policies perpetuate local perceptions of threat to ethno-nationalist survival in political, economic and demographic terms.

Chapter 4 continues the line of inquiry into territoriality and sovereignties by looking at the historical development of an alternative apparatus of schooling in the enclaves of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO). The existence of the KIO education apparatus, however rudimentary, from the early 1960s, shows that devolution of state power, the defining feature of ethnic politics in modern Myanmar according to Mary Callahan (2007)), is not a recent phenomenon. Rather, it existed in relatively complex forms from the beginning of the Socialist period. In light of the theoretical considerations presented in this introduction, the chapter illustrates how ethnic identities have been central to local statecraft, and how the political elites have sought to control the content and expression of ethnicity through institutional mechanisms. The partial stagnation of KIO's independent

schooling suggests that the "territorial trap" (Dean 2002) affects formal mass education even more than most other institutions in the Kachin polity. That the KIO would eventually push for adoption of the Burmese curriculum, and that the recent resumption of hostilities has broken down even that fragile arrangement, further underlines this argument. All this helps to appreciate the central question of this thesis about the rationale of private educators who have chosen to work independently of the KIO, despite being sympathetic to its political programme.

Chapter 5 will examine the organisational practices and status hierarchies in Kachin schools across different institutional landscapes. As elsewhere across Southeast Asia, the last decade has seen the introduction of new paradigms of educational practice, particularly learner-centred methods and an emphasis on critical thinking, into Kachin schooling. I am using some of the tensions and contradictions around this recent phenomenon as a privileged site for exploring wider issues around personal and institutional relations in schooling. Despite the conspicuous presence of novel methods in daily conversations I had with educators, these ideas appeared to be largely absent from actual classroom practice. Borrowing a lens from theories of education that see schools as an arena where the wider society's power relations are being played out (Datnow 1997; Bénéï 2008), I shall argue that staff and student relations in Kachin schools, particularly those administered by the KIO, often reflect practices of governance in the society as a whole. They also carry particular legacies from missionary encounters and military institutions that have shaped roles and values. Any effort to bring about tangible change in existing methods will need to address these issues. In part, the new generation of educators, influenced by studies abroad and wider access to information, is working towards this. However, as ethnographic material in the chapter demonstrates, private schools are still largely implicated in the same order of things as the larger educational apparatus.

Chapter 6 turns to consider the religious component of contemporary Kachin ethnicity that is equally essential for understanding the local organisational networks, as well as the moral horizons of the people who run them. I begin the chapter by surveying the complex religious landscape that characterises the Kachin areas today. Spaces, places and geographical imaginaries are saturated with – and often polarised between – religious symbolisms. The latter carry deep resonances

with ethno-national identification and political ideologies. As such, notions of religious belonging and community constitute central elements in discourses on national development. Ethnographic material presented in the second half of the chapter explains the pervasive authority of organisations such as the Kachin Baptist Convention in both public and private sphere. I offer examples of clerical influence in the everyday life of my Kachin colleagues and their schools. The chapter concludes by arguing that, for the contemporary urban intelligentsia, Christian organisations present a crucial resource in terms of networks, legitimacy, and material help. However, this also means that the educators are constantly negotiating the lasting authority of Christian elites, including their visions of the collective future of Kachinland.

Finally, Chapter 7 engages with the fact that, in the contemporary Kachin society, Christian visions of national development constitute potent, as well as popular, discourses on modernity. Historical evidence examined here suggests that the Baptist missionary enterprises were, since their inception, deeply concerned with social development of the communities they sought to convert. They also propagated particular notions of Christian nationhood, legacies of which are still present in the contemporary imaginaries. Equally salient were ideas of progress and modernity, of which the Christian organisations were portrayed to be moral guardians. Inevitably, these ideas also carried latent contradictions, as tensions emerged around protecting traditional social hierarchies and moral horizons. This was particularly important because the latter have long supported the social status of clerical institutions. As with the secular political authority of KIO leadership, debates around legitimate expressions of ethnicity and moral dilemmas in a Christian register form the backdrop for the efforts of contemporary reformers and activists in the Kachin society. Younger educators, to whom this thesis is dedicated, are in particularly complex roles, as their practice remains closely aligned with and dependent upon dominant Christian organisations, just as their moral selves are largely lived through Christian worldviews.

CHAPTER I Methods and Rapport

My first exposure to the realities of the Kachin Hills came in the summer of 2010. A researcher from Tallinn University, to whom I am greatly indebted for introducing me to a people who have come to play a central role in my academic and personal life, proposed I join her and another young scholar on a research trip to the Kachin State, Myanmar. At the time, my main ethnographic interest revolved around state borders and ethno-nationalism in Central Asia's Ferghana Valley. While I knew comparatively little of Myanmar aside from Edmund Leach's classic work in political anthropology, it felt like a challenging opportunity and a logical continuation of my prior research in new settings. Like many young anthropologists, I felt drawn to the anomalous, contested, and repressed. The fragmented borderlands between Myanmar and China, with their long legacy of civil wars and state-perpetrated violence, were equally daunting and magnetic. In youthful enthusiasm bordering on naiveté, I saw a place where committed ethnographic research could make a difference to political calamities and human suffering.[15]

This was the mind-set in which I first entered Kachin territories in the KIA-controlled Mai Ja Yang enclave. We were picked up from Ruili, a booming trading hub on the Chinese side of the border and taken across to Kachinland. I did not know it at the time, but the dusty road through rice fields girding the unmarked border was to become a regular route for me over the next two years. We were met by a group of young Kachin activists and housed in the former office bloc of the Pan Kachin Development Society (PKDS) that was in the process of being dismantled. I remember the darkness of our first night, disturbed by nothing but the flicker of

15 Joel Robbins has recently argued that the "suffering subject" has, since the 1980s, constituted a surrogate for the traditional cultural 'other' in anthropological discourse (2013). While not discrediting the socially conscious research, his assertion does suggest adherence to academic trends warranting further critical appraisal. In hindsight, my own case might well have been an example of overtly optimistic encounter with a highly complex and challenging research environment. That said, I believe that devoting myself to researching the Kachin State was both necessary and ethical at the time, regardless of my initial motivators.

fireflies and a humming reddish glow rising from the settlements on the Chinese side of the imaginary divide. It was during the week that followed that the general direction of my doctoral research started taking shape. The people we met on that first visit left an indelible impression on me. What I witnessed amid the uncertainties of borderworld existence was unwavering commitment to one's community, devotion to one's religion, and sheer human resilience. Here were people cut off from the world as I had known it, dispossessed and driven by decades of displacement and violence. Yet against these odds, institutions had been established to protect the environment, provide education, give meagre welfare and cultivate faith.

I recall, towards the end of our stay, sitting in the room of my friend Ja Naw. It held very few items. A couple of shirts hung in the shimmering sunlight, three or four books on a shoddy table, a plastic LED lamp in the corner. We sat on the edge of a hard mattress and spoke of life and research. He had been imprisoned on political charges for carrying a disk of Kachin songs and had been released only recently. He spoke of love for the people who had been forced to arrest him, the young Bamar soldiers who wore their insignia without credence. There was no room for cynicism in that moment. We spoke of the possibility of studying a people in a distant country and culture, of translatability of foreign meaning and lifeworlds. Much of the epistemological and ethical inquiries of this thesis were set out in the spontaneous simplicity of his words, which I have been unable to reformulate since. I made a promise then, of commitment, should I decide to study the Kachin. I can only hope that the last four years of my life have lived up to that pledge.

Tackling political communities and formal schooling

I returned less than a year later as a doctoral student with a keen interest in the political institutions of contemporary Kachin society. In particular, I wanted to understand the mechanisms that reproduced ethno-nationalist sentiments and allegiances vis-à-vis dominant ideologies of the Burmese state. At this early stage, my aim was to supplement existing studies that had predominantly focused on military elites and the armed struggle for political autonomy (South 2008; Callahan

2005; Lintner 1997; Smith 1991). What I sought was an understanding of ethno-national politics and development from a different perspective. Following the classic work on reproduction in formal education by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron (1977), turning to schooling seemed like the most logical step. Here was an institution central to statecraft, yet one that existed, at least formally, outside the military fold. However, I soon realised that my initial aversion to the bellicose had to be rethought to accommodate the lived realities of the contemporary Kachin State.

The present-day Kachin society remains militarised to a significant degree. Ideas of the political largely conform to the classic Schmittian dictum of friend versus foe (Schmitt 2007 [1927]). What I had underestimated was the degree to which concerns about armed conflict permeate civilian life and discourse. Almost everyone I came to know during my fieldwork had lost someone in the conflict, to arbitrary repressions, or incarceration. Everyday conversations around tea would inevitably veer towards the frontlines, armaments, and casualties. Among elites and commoners alike, the perceived failure of political dialogue and democratisation were commonly ridiculed as the "Burmese way to democracy" (see Chapter 3 below). The sentiment hints at perceived hypocrisy of military leadership and hides deep insecurities and mistrust. For many local youth, a future in the military seems not only fated but preferable to the scarce alternatives. Many of the students with whom I worked were either former soldiers or belonged to the citizen militias that the KIA has been training in response to the mounting government offensive.

Yet ever since my first visits to the Kachin State, I had also heard opposing voices. There were always those who sought answers to local development through other means. While sympathetic to armed resistance for self-preservation, many saw the continuation of the conflict as disruptive to the societal institutions that were only just beginning to emerge. Most vocal among them were the educators who, by the long-term nature of their work, would feel the impacts most keenly. It is between these two extremes that I encountered the first tensions discussed in this thesis. Had I chosen to exclude the discourse on war and military authority from my research, I might well have overlooked an issue so topical to the contemporary Kachin affairs.

My initial plan had been to focus on formal education provided by the Kachin Independence Organisation in the territories they controlled. Pace Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), I wanted to focus on the dynamics of reproduction and reform in the context of Teachers Training College in Mai Ja Yang. Part of the reason was practical. Even more so than most government institutions, schools constitute particularly sensitive sites for ethnographic work in the eyes of the state. In Latin America, for example, successive military governments barred much of qualitative research from public schools during 1960s and 1970s (G. Anderson and Montero-Sieburth 1998, xiv; see also Batallán 1998). In a similar fashion, independent ethnographic research in government schools and colleges in the Kachin State would have been nearly impossible. As opposed to the central government, the KIO has been more open to scholarly engagement in the past (Dean 2002; Lintner 1997). Based on initial discussion with my teacher colleagues from several KIO schools, I had every reason to believe that a measure of access would not only be granted but actively encouraged. As KIO Education Secretary, Sumlut Gam asserted during our first meeting in Mai Ja Yang in 2010, "We don't want newspaper coverage. The world needs to learn the real truth about the Kachin situation. What we need is book research". I was thus reasonably encouraged to build my research plans around the Teachers Training College that was situated in a crucial KIO enclave near the Chinese border. Apart from theological seminaries run by religious organisations, Teachers Training College constitutes the central institution of Kachin education. Its reformist principal was a good friend of mine and I had stayed on the campus on previous visits. By working with staff and students there I was hoping to learn how political sentiments are being reproduced and contested in formal settings. What I had not anticipated was the intensification of armed conflict that had reignited in late 2010.

Symbolically, the point was finally driven home one afternoon in 2011. I had arrived in Ruili, China, and was waiting to arrange yet another transport across the border to Mai Ja Yang. Throughout the week, news of government offensives had kept mounting. The gravity of the situation was illustrated in an e-mail from Nnye La Raw, the acting vice-principal of TTC. Accompanying his invitation were photos of students, drenched in sweat and dust, digging trenches and shelters around the

perimeter of the campus in anticipation of an impending attack. I had, of course, been long aware of armed conflicts in the area. While I was visiting the TTC a few months prior, the KIA conducted nightly drills in the surrounding hills that left little doubt that the situation was escalating. I had been drawn to the region for much of the same "romance" as Ashley South describes in reference to his fieldwork with the Karen rebels (South 2008, 40). Yet as much as the notion of becoming a frontline anthropologist resonated with some parts of me, I realised that day in Ruili that long-term school ethnography in conditions of siege would be neither feasible nor ethical. Despite unyielding bravery and optimism of young leaders like La Raw, nobody could tell with any certainty whether the hostilities were temporary or the start of another decade of brutal war.[16] The fate of the Mai Ja Yang enclave was particularly uncertain. Academic work at the college continued despite temporary disruptions, but most of the town's Chinese population had already forsaken their businesses and taken refuge across the border. The Kachin population left behind was ready to do the same and I would have posed both a risk and a burden in case of forced flight. Uncertain and feverish in my rundown Ruili hotel room, that night I finally decided I needed to review my research plans.

Private schooling amid competing fields

It was from this point onwards that my focus shifted towards private schooling. I had prior experience with one educational initiative in Myitkyina and the town was more easily accessible through regular routes via Mandalay. In hindsight, this early concession led me to questions about the internal dynamics, tensions and change in the Kachin society vis-à-vis Myanmar as a whole, that were equally relevant, if not more so, than what I had originally planned to ask.

For lack of viable alternatives, the KIO schools continue to follow a curriculum identical to that used in rest of the country. They are inextricably tied to the central system via accreditation laws. The main difference lies in the addition of Jinghpaw language and history classes, both of which serve overt aims of nation-building as envisioned by the political elite. As far as academic freedoms go, the KIO schools

16 Developments since suggest the latter to be closer to truth. At the time of writing, no lasting cease-fire has been signed between the KIO and the tatmadaw and armed clashes are still frequent.

tend to be as centralised as their Myanmar counterparts in the rest of the country. Individual teachers have little say in changing established routines or making amends. In contrast, private institutions are free to experiment with their own curricula and teaching methods. At the time of my fieldwork, no private school in the Kachin State had been accredited by the central government and legal provisions to that end were yet to be implemented. This absence of accreditation meant that many schools were free to run their classes without external supervision. A growing segment of private education in Myanmar is geared towards profit and mainly offers English classes to children from well-to-do families (see also Lall 2008). While interesting in their own right, their syllabi follow a fairly utilitarian model for gaining language proficiency. Yet alongside these more conventional models another segment exists whose aims exhibit a greater political assertiveness. Run by a young generation of committed reformers and volunteers, these programmes embody particular paradigms of national development.[17] What I came to understand over the months and years was that paying close attention to the everyday work in these apparently marginal institutions is, in fact, revelatory not only of their particular cases but of wider tensions in the politics of education, ethnicity and religion in contemporary Northern Myanmar. Had I stuck to my original research plan, I might well have overlooked the relevance of this small but significant sector.

Herein lay the puzzle. Why, despite overwhelming patriotic sentiment and reverence for the KIO, were some of these young, bright, and markedly qualified educators opting to set up schools on their own? In conditions where a chronic shortage of human resources was one of the most talked about problems, where not only villages but towns were lacking schools for want of teachers, where employment and status would have been guaranteed to specialists with their credentials, were those educators opting out? One simple answer was undoubtedly money. KIO schooling pays little, even by the deflated standards of Northern Myanmar. However, had salary been the sole rationale, many established private

17 It should be noted that, while sharing certain traits such as age group and educational background abroad, this group is equally characterised by a diversity of opinions and ethnic belonging to different Kachin subgroups. Though largely sympathetic to the political aspirations of the KIO and identifying with communities of Christian faith, subtle nuances distinguish nearly all individuals referred to here.

schools would have offered more competitive wages to prospective teachers, often without official certificates. More to the point, some of the schools I studied were unable to pay their teachers and managers for months on end, regardless of whether they worked under the KIO or independently. There was also the issue of autonomy and lack of involvement of teachers in the decision making process within KIO schools. However, opting for a private organisation also carried risks in itself and the benefits were by no means guaranteed at the outset. Furthermore, many of these young intellectuals had consciously disavowed clerical careers, which would have guaranteed social status and a reasonable income. Indeed, the number of young Kachin graduates who defer to theological calling is suggesting the extent to which the former are willing to take risks and work against the flow.

To be sure, financial incentives and autonomy would have had limited influence on their decisions. But what if there were other, equally relevant factors at play? What if experiments with private schooling carried in them a form of latent critique towards the established order? Whether explicitly or not, the way institutions were set up outside frameworks offered by the state actors and religious organisations suggested a search for new paths to development. What if, in that dialectic process, one could identify tensions between different political actors, competing paradigms of development, and ideologies?

Focusing on several private schools in Myitkyina and Laiza gave me a chance to probe these questions further. What I came to understand during the two years spent in different schools was that local educators had to accommodate different, often competing, political positions in their daily practice. Deference to authority was counterbalanced with ideas and aspirations outside of the dominant ideologies. The very existence of a third stream of educational programmes, unaffiliated with the state but also working towards developmental aims, was a manifestation of such diversity of opinions. What makes such programmes compelling subjects for ethnographic study is the subtle but persistent critique they level against larger political movements through their practice. They exist as loci of ideas, catalysts of sorts, to internal transformations, "reconciling diversity with the homogenizing tendencies of the nation-state" (Lem and Leach 2002, 6). Describing why and how this interplay between different ideas and dispositions reveals itself in everyday life

of schools and educators thus became one of the central themes that the chapters below seek to explicate. In so doing, I concentrate on the meanings educators attribute to events and personal histories, and the way their practices reflect their beliefs and aspirations through the dominant paradigms.

In (partial) defence of multi-sited ethnography

This approach left me with a dilemma whether to limit myself to a single institution or focus on several in comparison. In the following section I give reasons as to why the latter ended up being my choice. One of the central starting points of my thesis is the argument that political relevance of formal schooling can only be understood in relation to other social fields (Bourdieu 1985). Véronique Bénéï usefully notes that "rather than a 'total institution' in the Goffmanian sense of enclosure entailed by the formulation, school [should be] envisaged as constantly open and in dialogue with other institutions and society at large" (2008, 21). Examining this dialogue through narratives and events around private schools and larger educational paradigms, propagated by competing institutions and social fields, is the preferred methodological approach employed in this work. Considering the geopolitical, ethnic and religious contexts of the region, as well as the heterogeneous nature of the formal institutions that participate in pedagogic practice, switching between different localities was arguably not only viable but a more lucrative a path to take.

This led me to consider the benefits and pitfalls of multi-sited ethnography that, over the last two decades, has gained significant attention in anthropological discourse (Coleman et al 2013; Falzon 2009). I agree with the main epistemological criticism levelled on the uncritical use of the term, namely that it stands in danger of being an *a priori* coherence in something that is, in fact, largely constructed by the research encounter and ethnographer's disposition towards the subject.[18] In line with Ghassan Hage, I therefore find it more helpful to simply speak of a "geographically non-contiguous space" in which my fieldwork took place (Hage 2005, 467). What I followed were people and institutions dispersed across several geographical locales,

18 As for more recent attempts to extend the concept beyond spatial referents, I do not find the need in my present work to push the limits of conventional ethnography as far (cf Marcus 2009).

spanning three different countries and competing domains of sovereignty. Though the choice between particulars was certainly my own, the places and spaces thus inhabited were not arbitrary in themselves, but had developed through particular histories of pan-Kachin migration. Among the groups I was in which I was most interested, these migrations were often temporary in nature but relied on established networks of support (e.g. religious organisations, ethnic communes, kinship, etc.).[19] While formally autonomous entities, schools would also draw resources and expertise from similar networks. For all practical purposes, it thus makes sense to think of formal schooling in this context as a "translocal" institution (Gupta 1995, 376).

What I came to realise as months passed was that the loose-limbed nature of my fieldwork actually traced the professional and personal trajectories of many of my local colleagues. Depending on the position of the observer, the whole territorial project of the KIO could be seen as a disjointed endeavour in that individual enclaves remain unconnected through any juridical or de facto borders. Despite territorial fragmentation, there exists a lively traffic between them, even in times of heightened political tensions and war. This traffic proceeds along shifting bounds and trajectories, determined by geopolitics of the day (Sadan 2013; Dean 2007a; Dean 2005). Thus, rather than encountering an isolated society, I came to understand that educators, church activists, and development workers among the contemporary Kachin are often leading fairly mobile lives.

Many institutional structures in the Kachin society are both dependent upon and supportive of this trend. Educational initiatives, for example, are commonly founded on an ad hoc basis, making use of the scarce resources at hand. They are predominantly staffed by volunteers who travel among different parts of the country according to need. It was not uncommon for some of the younger teachers to have taught in schools as far apart as Manhkring and Hpakant within the course

19 I am speaking here of my informants who travelled abroad mainly in search of higher education or training. There exists a long-standing and unremitting migration out of the Kachin State that is driven by poverty, search of employment, political persecution, and often coercion (Egreteau 2012; Grundy-Warr 2004). A growing body of literature suggests that women are disproportionately affected by this (Ying 2013; Wright 2008). While a few of the people I worked with had, at one point in their lives, followed similar reasons, they were almost invariably bent on returning to the Kachin regions or had done so already.

of a single academic year.[20] A central role in this practice is played by extensive faith based organisations such as the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) who provide limited monetary support, facilities and legitimacy. Likewise, transnational NGOs such as the Pan Kachin Development Society (PKDS) (largely defunct now but very influential in the early 1990s), its outgrowth BRIDGE, and the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT), have long supported supra-local identities and practice. An increasing number of young Kachin acquire parts of their professional training abroad. Due to halting bureaucratic procedures, lengthy round trips to Yangon are necessary to acquire legal paperwork. There is also a bustling exchange of people, often in professional capacities, between KIO enclaves and the rest of Burma.

In short, losing access to a stable field-site in Mai Ja Yang and having to move between several different locales made me realise that there were insights to be gained from those travels. As I argue in the chapters below, geographical movement has had significant impact on the personal lifeworlds and political sentiments of the groups with whom I worked. It has often helped them build up institutional capacities in Kachinland and informed subsequent organisational practices. By "following the people" (Marcus 1995) along similar geographical trajectories, I not only experienced the shifting contexts of their lives but also gained further insight into their formative influence.

This is not to say that there were no limitations to my chosen approach. One of the traditional foundations of ethnographic method has been commitment in time. The underlying logic is irrefutable in its simplicity. You familiarise yourself with a particular place and people and allow the latter to familiarise themselves with you. Social relationships grow slowly. Neither professional rapport nor friendships in the field (most anthropologists I know rely invariably on both) can be cultivated overnight; neither can cultural competence so integral to good observational skills and "thick" descriptions (Geertz 1973). It is understood that by moving around between different locales, I had to make sacrifices on both accounts. However, two

20 The meagre bird's-eye distance of around 200 km belies the difficulties of this transition, both in terms of rough terrain and dangers on the road. Mainly known for its jade reserves, much of the fighting in recent years has concentrated in and around Hpakan area.

points are worth raising in this context. First is the palpable fact that, while skipping between places, the people with whom I worked moved on similar routes as me. I might have changed towns, but not social circles. In this sense, the very nature of what is classically assumed to be a bounded field-site might be better understood as Hage's "geographically non-contiguous space" (2005, 467) of social relations. The second argument is more ontological. Mark-Anthony Falzon has suggested that "it is not just time that transforms and makes, but also space"; that the two are, in some sense, methodologically interchangeable (Falzon 2009, 9). In this connection, rapport normally established through a prolonged period of cohabitation could also be fostered by long roads travelled, and distant places dwelt in. Having visited Kachin territories in Laiza and Mai Ja Yang not only gave me insights into local geographical imagination but also helped establish rapport with Kachin communities in Myitkyina or abroad (e.g. living with Kachin expatriates students in Chiang Mai had us sharing many of the same challenges one faces in new contexts, volunteering at a range of Kachin schools gave my presence a more tangible rationale, etc.). Neither argument would make my chosen method superior to long-term commitment to a single site. Yet in hindsight, I do believe that they helped me generate knowledge that I would not have gotten otherwise.

Quite contrary to my initial expectations, I ended up spending a significant amount of my fieldwork in Chiang Mai, Thailand. I kept a room in one of the cheap tenement houses in the Wat Kate neighbourhood that Kachin migrants formerly rented and where my Jinghpaw teacher was living most of the year. I consider myself incredibly lucky for having the time and patience afforded me during those lengthy meetings with my teacher. My days would usually start with lessons in his tiny office-bedroom, stacked to the ceiling with translations-in-progress, various Jinghpaw publications, and Christian literature. I would sit with him at his sizeable desk, repeating a list of words in my teacher's shorthand and translating stories from old Kachin readers. The lessons would often veer off-topic towards the end, and we would start discussing Kachin Baptist morality and Biblical interpretations that my teacher took to be integral part of my training. We were rarely joined by others, but we would sometimes visit local Kachin households after our classes. Apart from my teacher, I became reliant on a small network of Kachin contacts

related to educational or religious organisations in the Kachin State, including the NHTOI private school in Myitkyina that constitutes one of my primary case studies.[21] Six students with whom I had formerly worked in Myitkyina were enrolled at local universities in Chiang Mai, and were actively participating in networks serving the said organisations. We met as often as their studies allowed, usually for evening meals around our neighbourhood or a cup of iced coffee. I was also having irregular meetings with KIO contacts working in Chiang Mai, both for formal interviews and social dinners. On weekends, my teacher and I generally attended Wunpawng Christian Church on the outskirts of the city and participated in social activities organised by its youth organisation, which sported dozens of members. The months spent in this expatriate context allowed me to follow transnational support networks employed by Kachin elites and commoners alike. It was my close acquaintance with several students who would later return to Myanmar that gave me insights into the formative influence of foreign studies and the effects these would have back home.

In Myanmar, Myitkyina, the capital of the Kachin State, served as my primary research location. The long train rides from Mandalay, usually terminating in the impenetrable darkness that is nighttime Myitkyina, became something of a routine for me as I kept switching between field-sites on a bimonthly basis. Two of the three private schools I studied were located here, and I made occasional visits to several others. The first of these was NHTOI that I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2. I had been introduced to the small group of local activists running the school during my first visit to the Kachin State and we had been in contact ever since. During the four years afterward, the campus has changed grounds on three occasions, moving from the main compound of the Kachin Baptist Convention to a small village on the outskirts of Myitkyina and finally back to a third location closer to the centre. While here, I would normally get up at sunrise, organise my notes and prepare for the morning classes where I taught English. I would then spend the afternoon on the campus with a group of three or four teachers, or do interviews around town.

Apart from NHTOI, I also focused on another English school in Myitkyina. While

21 I have scrambled the acronym to protect the identity of this organisation.

NHTOI was catering to a handful of mature students aiming for studies abroad, English 4 Life enrolled over one hundred primary and secondary school students from disadvantaged families. Like the former, however, it too was set up to fill what the educators saw as a gap in state-led schooling. I did not participate in the everyday life of the school to the same extent as with NHTOI. However, I was asked to conduct a weekly seminar on teaching methodology that was attended by a group of eight young teachers employed at English 4 Life. It was in semi-formal settings such as these that I could engage with the staff in a relatively free environment for discussing aspects of their work, individual aspirations and values.

In addition to working with educators, I was conducting interviews with local elites, particularly members of the clergy. I tried to engage with both the Kachin Baptist Convention and the Roman Catholic Church, the two major denominations who exercise significant influence on non-state education in the area. As in Chiang Mai, I was regularly invited to attend Sunday services in different churches as well as various Christian ritual events in family settings. My role at these gatherings was always marginal and I was treated with the usual hospitality afforded to guests. I made no secret of being baptised as a Lutheran. This fact placed me outside the main cleavage between Baptists and Catholics in the Kachin society and imbued my position with certain neutrality. I also made frequent trips to nearby Nawng Nang that houses the campus of Kachin Theological College. I was kindly afforded the use of the library there which provided me with both visual and textual material analysed in Chapters 6 on religious authority in the field of social development.

Despite having lost permanent access to the Mai Ja Yang enclave, I did visit both it and Laiza on several occasions throughout my fieldwork. At the time of my research, the enclave acted as the de facto headquarters of KIO.[22] Laiza's population numbers have risen considerably in recent years to an estimated 22,000, mainly due to conflict-related migration from the rest of Myanmar. Several massive internally displaced person (IDP) camps had risen on the hillsides surrounding the town, with a combined population of around 15,000 inhabitants, most of them women and children. This put considerable strain on local schools and welfare institutions

22 The previous base of operations having been in the upland Pajau area until the early 2000s (see Map 1).

struggling to serve a population size far beyond institutional capacities. In the local middle school, class numbers had almost doubled in size. The first half of the room would be filled with regular students, clad in green and white uniforms and generally engaged with their lessons. Along the back walls were lined a motley crew of refugee children of various ages, lacking both the study materials and the preparation of their peers. Private schools like Nawng E Hku kept their regular classes intact but provided space for evening classes where local volunteers were grappling with excessive numbers of recently arrived children. During my first visits I was housed with one of the local farmers looking after school gardens. I would spend mornings in classes or the teachers' quarters, and evenings at the farm. Nights around an open fire would see us huddling together with cups of warm tea, listening to soldiers on leave or older veterans discuss war stories. Often, villagers from nearby households would join me and other teachers for evening meals. The institution with which I worked most closely was the Nawng E Hku Mission School. Like the educational programmes I studied in Myitkyina, it was founded to provide an alternative to existing opportunities in schooling that, even in the KIO areas, were limited to the Burmese curriculum. Oriented towards Nagaland in India and importing a syllabus used in Christian schools there, Nawng E Hku provided an important precedent for Kachin education as a whole. Though initially scorned at by the Central Education Office of the KIO, it has since acquired considerable reputation even among local political leaders. Its history and present situation illustrate the complexities found in even small and internally concordant political spaces such as Laiza.

Further notes on methods

Whether I was staying in Myitkyina, Laiza or Mai Ja Yang, I tried to devote the majority of my time to participating in the daily work of schools. Most mornings, I would spend a couple of hours teaching English classes or other relevant subjects according to particular programmes. I lunched with teachers and students, sat in on curricular meetings and partook of evening activities. Time spent on school grounds turned out to be most valuable to my overall goals. Most campuses I came to know first-hand would draw students from different settings. There would be urbanites with well-to-do social backgrounds, but also those who had travelled great

distances from the mountainous hinterlands, often at great personal risk, and were seeing centres like Myitkyina for the first time. This allowed me to gather anecdotal evidence of the state and role of formal education in different parts of Kachinland in the form of life histories and first-hand reports by former staff and students.

However, I also heeded Herve Varenne's (2007) suggestion that ethnography of education should be open to leaving the space of the classroom and the school. Indeed, most of the political debate around schooling and national development that was of direct interest for my research took place in the late hours of the evening after the first round of beer cans lay empty on the bamboo flooring. During a couple of nights every week, I would accompany my colleagues, both women and men, to roadside tea shops or more noisy restaurants along the riverfront. Like Bénéï in her work with teachers in India, I found that non-professional surroundings changed people's behaviour and helped them express their personal opinions (2008, 125). Indeed, I was often surprised at how openly people spoke in public spaces that were hardly anonymous or secluded. For the most part, I trusted the local sensibilities of my informants on whether or not this was safe, and simply went along with the discussions. In any case, such evenings brought together Kachin educators, students, activists, clerics, and other specialists from different walks of life and offered insightful forums for hearing opposing opinions.

In addition to private schools, my interest in religious institutions grew with each passing month of my fieldwork. On the level of the "practice of everyday life" (de Certau 1984), Christian ritual and narratives played a central role for the wide majority of my informants. Over time, I became increasingly aware of tensions between discursive formations of secular knowledge and traditional clerical authority. Against the background of my two primary interests of political community and formal education, problems related to organised religion became increasingly salient. Thus while church visits had been more of a personal and communal choice in the beginning of my fieldwork, they soon grew into important sites of investigation.

On weekends, I normally attended services with local congregations in the company of a few teacher colleagues. The majority of those took place in Baptist settings,

although I made the point of trying to visit different denominations in Myitkyina. Some of the most interesting and insightful discussions evolved after morning services when reverends and laymen alike partook of common meals. Insofar as Kachin churches today act as catalysts of social cohesion and community activism, I was commonly introduced to new people during these meetings. I also attended everyday rituals that were held in individual households and that were usually presided over by local reverends. In the chapters that follow, I do not aim to provide a comprehensive account of Kachin Christianities. Each would merit a separate study in itself, which is beyond the scope and aims of the present work.[23] When touching upon religious themes in the present work, my aim is to illustrate the influence of Christian discourse in the sphere of politics, and to show the centrality of religious practices and commitment in the daily life of schools and educators with whom I worked.

From the early stages of research design, my approach was to concentrate on teachers and adult students exclusively. Foremost, this choice was based on ethical considerations for the safety of my informants. As a doctoral student with no prior experience in research with minors, starting such work in the politically volatile context of Northern Myanmar would have been an unfeasible and possibly irresponsible endeavour. There were not any mechanisms at my disposal for ensuring the physical safety and mental wellbeing of children in the context of war and displacement. In short, I was unqualified. Aside from ethical concerns, the decision to focus on older generations stemmed from my ethnographic aims. As already noted, I was primarily interested in the role of teachers in the Kachin society and the way the younger generation tries to foster institutional change through their practice. On the level of discourse, I was looking at debates around the nurturing of political community and national development through formal schooling. In both instances, I wanted to understand the perspective of educators and how they compared to those of other local elites.

This is not to say that I was barred from students' perspectives altogether. Apart

23 Herman Tegenfeldt's (1974) history of the Kachin Baptist church is a shining example of such scholarship from a theological perspective, as is the more recent book by Mandy Sadan that touches upon religious themes (2013). Dingrin La Seng offers a valuable overview of conversion among the Kachin of Upper Burma (2013).

from the Nawng E Hku Mission School in Laiza, the programmes with which I worked catered to mature students. While in the former case I limited myself to talking to staff alone, other contexts enabled me to engage with the students to understand their educational past, as well as their current perceptions of society and politics. I acknowledge that my approach led me to miss the experience of parents and other members of extended families, apart from those offered by the teachers themselves. In her study of schooling in rural France, Deborah Reed-Danahay alludes to the trade-off from the opposite perspective (2004, 17). However, as in her own case, limitations set by time and access forced me to narrow my scope in some direction and choosing to focus on educators seemed like a more pertinent choice, in that I wanted to understand institutional agency in relation to local politics of identity.

The above is also tied to the question of how I presented myself as a scholar and practitioner of education to the people with whom I worked. In a study of nationalism and schooling in Maharashtra State, India, Bénéï (2008) chose to keep her research topics veiled from her informants so as not to inspire designed performances. My initial approach was to take an opposite route. I aimed to discuss my research plans with all my contacts from the very beginning and try to separate deliberate performances, as Bénéï sees them, from ingenuous interaction. I did this both to garner trust and to gain access to resources that would otherwise be out of reach to a foreigner whose presence lacks a clearly defined purpose. It must be noted that this led to people often asking advice on running matters that might well have changed the way they performed. However, this would have happened regardless of how I presented my aims. Being partially involved in the discussions and processes of decision-making gave further opportunities for participant observation in institutional settings. I was careful to keep track of minor influences my presence could have had and to record each instance in my field diaries.

It would, of course, be naïve to assume that being transparent opened all doors in turn. Nor did I assume that all questions would be appropriate to ask. In her doctoral dissertation on territoriality in the Kachin State, Dean notes the balancing act involved in posing the relevant interview questions without pushing the limits of the politically sensitive (2002, 96). While this sense of balance can only be attained

through real interaction and compensated for in each particular instance, I maintain that being open about one's purpose constitutes the first necessary step in attaining what George E. Marcus refers to as "complicity" in ethnographic fieldwork (1997).

This said, I must also note that explaining the aims and context of my research to the people with whom I worked was not always easy. While sometimes attributable to a lack of common conceptual frameworks, it was more commonly due to the fact that the nature and focus of the work itself kept changing, as did my perceived role. While I had initially collaborated with several organisations as a volunteer teacher, and in a limited capacity continued to do so through my fieldwork, I increasingly emphasised my role as researcher with each passing month. At the same time, my aims and questions kept evolving, often spurred in new directions by my Kachin colleagues. I was thus engaged in a process of reinvention and reconceptualisation throughout my fieldwork and can only admire the patience shown by the people around me towards uncertainties and frustrations along the way. I now turn from this researcher's self-presentation to the representation of others that rightfully remains a highly debated issue in contemporary anthropological discourse.

Representing the unrepresented

A fundamental problem confronting any researcher who works with societies involved in struggles to preserve their identity and cultural practices vis-à-vis larger nationalities is that of representation (Mookherjee 2008; Armbruster 2008; Pettigrew, Shneiderman, and Harper 2004). This is particularly true in a globalizing world where aid, investment and political leverage often transcend immediate regional boundaries. There is a growing body of research suggesting that, despite geographical isolation and a chronic lack of resources, smaller ethnic nationalities in Southeast Asia are frequently implicated in global connections, for example through economic and environmentalist means (Tsing 2004; Zerner 2003). The discourse of indigenous rights has enabled some groups to pressure state governments for land rights and other benefits. Others have won concessions for regional autonomy through armed resistance. Nagaland (Chakraborty 2012) is a telling example in this context, not least because it is often referred to as a success story by the Kachin elites. International agencies can also play a weighty role in conflict resolution,

humanitarian relief, and environmental protection schemes. However, as Jonsson repeatedly emphasises in his work on Mien highlanders in the fringes of Northern Thailand, multilateral power relations can also place indigenous peoples "at risk of being discredited at either (or both) the national or the international level" (Jonsson 2010, 109; Jonsson 2005). Issues of collective representation can be highly consequential to all stakeholders.

In the context of political conflicts in Thailand, Alan Klima (2002) has shown how elites and general population alike have been influenced by international media imagery of the nation. According to Klima, this imagery draws its power both from political sanctions and collective self-esteem. It stands to argue that this becomes even more salient with smaller nations like the Kachin who are caught in a territorial trap between assertive neighbours (Grundy-Warr and Dean 2011; Dean 2011; 2007a; 2002). Public images broadcast abroad through media, academic publications and official reports can have considerable influence on the amount of resources pooled into any particular region by national and international donors who, as Lorch notes, tend to hold culturally determined conceptions of development (Lorch 2008; French 2006; Jackson 2007). As I learned through my own interviews, the leaders of organisations like the KIO are acutely aware of this and exercise notable caution with regards to their public image, even in markedly informal circumstances. Their concerns go beyond donor funding, involving geopolitical legitimacy and authority sought to maximise diplomatic support and justify continued use of violence to achieve political objectives.

In this sense, it is important to note that what is presented in this thesis is one interpretation of events, groups and individuals that make up its subject matter. Moreover, I am often conveying local views and meanings at odds with one another and with dominant ideologies. To follow Mandy Sadan's favoured metaphor of ideologies as "maps of understanding for our social and political worlds" (2013, 21), many of the ideas presented in the current work are the rivers, boulders and coppices of a living social landscape. These maps at best imitate, and often distort, the changing landscape. In a bid to remain truthful to the words of my colleagues and informants, I am aware that the chapters below are only partially in line with certain accepted political ideologies. Recognizing the dangers, I have used restraint

for topics not directly relevant to my research questions. I have also tried to explicate the contexts as best I could. In no way am I claiming to assert anything about the 'Kachin' as a 'people'. There are shared traits, and most of my informants would readily identify with the collective noun. However, my arguments can only ever refer to the people and organisations with whom I actually worked.

As part of an image of legitimate statehood, formal education forms an increasingly important variable in the construction of international credibility. Access to schooling is widely considered an inalienable human right, and governments are under pressure to guarantee the minimum of primary level of education. Moreover, through the so-called rates of return from education, academic discourse tends to correlate access to schooling with economic growth, improved public health and political stability (Pillay 2010; Lall 2008; Lorch 2008; Miller 2008; Tin 2004; Easterly 2001). Most national governments are thus trying to foster their reputation in this field for both local and outside observers (Bénéï 2008). Responding to internal and outside pressure, the Burmese state appears to have increased its education expenditure in recent years. The bulk of this has gone into school infrastructure projects, cementing, literally and metaphorically, the official stance that "development is what you see" (ICG 2004, 4). As Chapter 5 describes in more detail, the KIO has largely followed suit. It is probably not unfair to suggest that part of the rationale behind the KIO's provision of schooling is popular legitimacy in the areas under KIA control.

For small educational initiatives highly dependent on scarce foreign funding and institutional networks, the issues of representation are even more precarious. I recognise that in all cases, the results of my study can have limited impacts on institutional authority and reputation. However, like many of my Kachin colleagues, I feel that there is a need for wider dialogue around the politics of education on all levels of governance, and that giving voice to the minor actors is as much an ethical responsibility as maintaining objectivity. I have chosen to refer to all people, schools, and neighbourhoods via pseudonyms unless otherwise noted, to protect identities and to minimise potentially unwanted repercussions.

Taking sides

Any researcher involved in studying contemporary Kachin affairs must also inevitably confront one's own political allegiances. The problem has to do with ethics as well as objectivity, and is far from new for social sciences, least of all anthropology. When I first visited the Kachin Hills in 2010, the society was already disjointed along ethno-nationalist and religious fissures. After the start of the war, all existing divisions were further aggravated. In what has become a classic exposition of fieldwork ethics in challenging political contexts, June Nash notes that "[i]n a revolutionary situation, no neutrals are allowed" (1979, 354). In this untimely charge against idealised positivist neutrality in political sciences, Nash points to the fact that whether or not one expresses one's loyalties, political duress makes people categorise those around them according to perceived allegiances anyway. That tacitly assumed loyalty can have significant impacts on rapport was already shown by Geertz's flight from the famous cockfight (1973).

My situation was made somewhat easier by the fact that I was working with Kachin communities exclusively. My contact with Burmese officials was largely limited to bureaucratic dealings and did not involve any political negotiations. On a personal level, I had no doubts as to whose cause I supported. At no point during my fieldwork did I make a secret of my sympathies for Kachin autonomy and self-determination, or for the right of religious freedom for Christians. I do not find that my lack of forced neutrality in this context had significantly detrimental effects on the objectivity of my findings. To the contrary, despite my initial convictions, I soon discovered that, like many of my Kachin colleagues, I had to navigate more complex political categories. This gave me a more nuanced understanding of the ambiguities and internal tensions of politics in contemporary Northern Myanmar. The overt distrust of Nay Pyi Daw forms just the most obvious of questions with which one is confronted daily. For example, the Lawngwaw, one of the smaller Kachin subgroups, often feel that linguistic discrimination by the Bamar majority against the Jinghpaw was mirrored in the way Kachin elites treat the Lawngwaw (Maru) language. Church leaders would often inquire whether I was a liberal or conservative Christian, pointing out tensions between denominational cliques within religious orders. The issue of women's rights would frequently crop up with

older clergymen and young educators alike. I return to these issues in more detail in the chapters below. For the purposes of the present discussion, I merely want to point out that, more often than not, I chose to state (and often produce) my own stance on these issues for the sake of personal honesty, mutual reciprocity, and in order to encourage further debate.

Equally significant was my presence as an outsider to whom people could express – and thereby (re)construct – their own identities. I remember a student discussion we had at the Teachers Training College in Mai Ja Yang during one of my early visits. The principal had asked me to run a basic course on democratic governance, something he felt was lacking in the curriculum. Every morning for the next week we would meet in a sizeable auditorium to discuss basic concepts and historical trends pertinent to the subject, with around sixty aspiring teachers. All lectures were facilitated by the vice principal, who acted as a translator and discussant. On Saturday, we decided to give the floor to the students, both to test their understanding and encourage voicing their opinions. At the end of a particularly feisty presentation by one young man who decried what he took to be a toothless form of governance, the student turned to me with a challenge. "What is the use of democracy for our Kachin people? No Western country wants to support us. Why would they choose to recognise us if they think all Kachin are insurgents and drug lords?" Inherent in that powerful assertion was a locus of interconnected concerns about identity. On one level, it acted as a statement of autonomy that is one of the key signifiers in the contemporary Kachin nationhood. My role as a foreign scholar allowed that message to be communicated to an imagined audience beyond the confines of the enclave. In the context in which it was presented, the utterance also acted as a probe. Though rhetorical, the question was meant to prompt a public response from me, something that the student later admitted in private. My response was that the international community knew very little about the Kachin. I explained that various ethnic insurgencies are viewed differently and that, unlike some of the others, the Kachin Independence Organisation does not carry a reputation of a drug cartel. I also pointed out that the KIO is considered a political organisation and is not equated with the Kachin as an ethnic nationality category. It was just one of the ways in which I found my presence having been used to

(re)produce particular communal identifications.

Similar exchanges also worked on a more personal level. For example, school leaders would ask me whether they were doing enough in their work; reverends argued for the greater spiritual integrity of Kachin Christianity in comparison to perceived liberal tendencies in "the West". This is not to suggest that my presence was somehow indispensable or unique in this context. But being an interlocutor of this sort constituted an important dimension of rapport. To sum, I maintain that the fact that I did not try to perform the role of an apolitical observer, and that people were aware of my own ethical stance and beliefs, led to insightful discussions and discoveries for everyone involved and made for better rapport throughout my fieldwork and beyond.

Anonymity of informants and organisations

Despite the increasingly tense political climate from 2011 onward, I managed to continue working in Myitkyina relatively unhindered. I took all possible precautions to minimise suspicion by government agents and, to the best of my knowledge, my presence brought no adverse consequences for the people and organisations with whom I was in contact

My field notes were recorded either on paper or electronically. In the first instance, I used coded pseudonyms for the names of people and places, and regularly switched between field diaries, spreading out daily entries to further complicate tracing by third parties. In case of electronically recorded notes, including transcripts, interview recordings, and digital photographs, I used dedicated encryption software to compress and organise the files. Further security was added by the fact that I kept changing field locations on a regular basis. On the one hand, this allowed me to archive field notes in safe locations in Thailand. In the case of areas like Myitkyina, where all foreigners are formally registered (and potentially monitored) by the authorities, this practice made my presence less conspicuous and lessened the chance of my informants becoming subject to harassment. Interviews and focus groups were conducted either in private premises, or else in public locations where chances of anyone listening to the conversations could be minimised. In the latter case, I generally avoided public note-taking to further avoid potentially unwanted

attention to my interlocutors.

I also took precautions to ensure informant anonymity within the Kachin communities and among institutional settings. When referencing prior information in my interviews, I did not disclose the identity of previous respondents unless I felt it was both safe and necessary to do so. I also took close heed of suggestions made by my Kachin colleagues as to whom I could trust, and generally avoided pursuing contacts who were felt to be problematic from the point of view of anonymity of others in the field. As already noted, I deliberately avoided working in areas of active armed conflict to minimise the potential risks and liabilities to which local inhabitants would be subjected in case of flight or injury.

CHAPTER II Private Schooling in Laiza and Myitkyina: Negotiating Domains for Educational Work

We turned into a quiet side street in Myitkyina's Shatapru quarter. The afternoon rain had filled the unpaved road with deep pools of water. As always, the resilience of our little motorbikes pulling us through surprised me. The Humanity Institute was tucked in between houses scarcely different from it in size or shape. Apart from a small plaque announcing its purpose, one could have easily mistaken it for a large family home. Upstairs, a class was in session. The lecturer spoke Burmese dotted with English phrases like "human rights" and "policy review". We met our hosts on the ground floor. Mung Dan, the executive officer, was accompanied by another member, Naw Htoi, and the office secretary who was not introduced to me. My guide and I sat down on the deep wooden chairs. I had known the founder since 2012 but it was my first time in the office.

We spent some time on catching up since my last visit had been more than a year ago. Mung Dan was introducing their expanded program that had kept pace with increased space for civil society projects like his. A decade ago, even the words "human rights" would have sounded threatening to a passing policeman. Now, Naw Htoi said, one was free to "tout" them at will.

> *"What has changed is that one can talk about rights all day long. The authorities are no longer afraid of the word. You know, everyone is talking that these days. But when you start making accusations against someone, in the government, military, or even police. Then you will be in trouble".*

They asked about me and I briefly spoke of my writing and lecturing responsibilities which led us to the topic of teaching. As most similar organisations in Myitkyina, the Institute was constantly looking for new staff but their standards were high. At this point, my guide chipped in with a simile.

> *"You know Mart, there is a difference in the Kachin State. We can say sara kaba*

[respected teacher] and we can say kara kaja [good teacher]. That is a big issue these days. The problem is, there is this kind of mindset in our society. If a job gets finished it is finished and that is the end. You just go and forget about it. It no longer concerns you. What I mean is, people do not think for long about the results of their work. It is like the yi farmer. He plants his crop and then it just grows. He does not like to think about it anymore. But as you know, society is different..."

Mung Dan agreed that sustainability was the key. That it was important to try and keep good teachers and build trust between donors and organisations. I used the opportunity to ask about their local benefactors for I had heard that not all their operating costs came from outside. In particular, I wanted to know about their engagement with the Kachin Baptist Convention. "No", Mung Dan retorted,

"KBC, they have their own program, like ECCD, KG. And KBC is actually, how to say, the church, they really have autonomy. So before, the central organisation didn't have much influence on them. Only recently the armed conflict has created space, more power for the central authority [in Myitkyina]. Before, the local churches had 90% of authority. Now some churches are not happy with that. When we contacted the KBC now, they just want us to work under their banner. And that is why we don't contact them. Our goals is not the same. We did contact the Catholic diocese. But they basically said the same. It is untold but in the Kachin society there are two major religious powers, the KBC and the Catholics. We have a few others, like the Anglicans, but their influence is not so big. But the two, they are quite powerful. If you ask them for something, they want you to do everything in their name. If you do, then it will be quite easy for you. You can see for yourself. To some organisations they have given funding. And they will already have a market because they announce them in their churches and the students will come. They don't have to worry about facilities, renting again and again every year. They will simply have church properties. Maybe they will even receive some human resources. Sometimes the bishop can say: 'You, you will have to teach for them'. But if we are independent, we have many challenges. We try to do things differently, to be open to all – the Baptists and Catholics and Buddhists – according to our mission. But whenever we try something it is more difficult"

Introduction

The scene above, recorded in 2015, sketches out several themes discussed in this chapter. In it, some of the discontent felt by the younger educators and activists is contrasted with the daily realities of finding institutional backing for civil society projects in the Kachin State. In what follows, I will elaborate on these topics by drawing on examples from several privately-run educational initiatives I worked with. I will ask why they have come about at this point in time and what drives their leadership to work outside the framework of established organisations. Two factors call attention to these questions. Firstly, the schools are coping with a chronic scarcity of resources. Secondly, the founders of these schools continue to staunchly support, on both ideological and religious grounds, the larger organisations with which they have chosen to part. Contrary to some recent analyses of schooling in Myanmar that gloss over ethno-political complexities and treat formal schooling in the country as an essentially uncontested whole (e.g. James 2009), I argue that education amongst the ethnic nationalities in Myanmar remains a highly fragmented and politicised issue. Looking at the rationale of developing private schools in this context draws attention to important points of tension. Foremost amongst these is the opposition to the symbolic and physical violence of the central state characterised by decades of Burmanisation, perceived and real. The principal contribution of the present chapter is showing that, in addition to resistance to the central government in Nay Pyi Daw, important frictions can be found within the more tightly knit Kachin society itself. Tensions also emerge between established political and religious organisations firmly led by an older generation of Kachin elites. It is within this context that educators strive to negotiate for further institutional autonomy and space for professional activities. One of the principal aims of this chapter is showing that, rather than being mere symptoms of unresolvable conflict and grievances, these frictions can also be productive, leading to new institutional formations and debates within Kachin society and Myanmar as a whole. Coming back to the theoretical considerations presented in the Introduction, this chapter draws together several strands of history and ethnography that will be running through this thesis. I argue that the apparatus of schooling in the contemporary Kachin State constitutes a complex set of

organisational structures, networks, and discourses. The functions of this apparatus as a whole certainly include but are not limited to reproduction commonly ascribed to schooling by structuralist arguments.

The chapters below will argue that Kachin elites have long been aware of the importance of formal schooling for their political projects. The same holds true for local Christian organisations whose role in education has been central both historically and in recent times. By the time mission schools were nationalised by the Burmese state in the 1960s, a formidable base of Kachin intellectuals with strong nationalist leanings had emerged.[24] However, the ensuing civil war broadly separated this group into two categories who were henceforth only partially involved in the field of formal education. There were those like the schoolmaster-turned-statesman Maran Brang Seng (just like the generation of Burmese nationalists decades earlier), who took up arms to lead the nascent revolutionary movement. Others found themselves deprived of their political agency outside of the sphere of religious production and focused their energies on leading powerful Christian organisations. Importantly, the late 1970s witnessed a gradual introduction of formal schooling in areas under de facto Kachin Independence Army (KIA) control. However, this system remained circumscribed by geographies of conflict and deprived of crucial resources. With the 1994 ceasefire, KIO education was more or less formalised as a separate and autonomous system and exercised limited exchange with its counterpart in Myanmar. In practical terms, however, recognition from Yangon equally subjected it to Burmese control through the adoption of a centralised curriculum. Concurrently, several private educational initiatives emerged in KIO areas and beyond. Their leaders sought to establish alternative routes to higher education more fully in the service of Kachin ethno-nationalist project. Yet, as the example of Pan Kachin Development Society (PKDS) given in Chapter 4 suggested, these projects eventually broke down due to personal political rivalries, scarce and unreliable international connections and lack of space for autonomous institutional action.

Rather than seeing these earlier attempts as failures, however, I argue that they were

24 Similar fates befell Buddhist monastic schools, which lost official recognition between 1962 and 1993.

foundational in both paradigmatic and structural sense. In the first instance, they had opened ways of thinking outside of the existing establishment and methods, much like their present incarnations are striving to do. A successive generation of younger educators was able to continue in their wake, utilizing the scarce networks and infrastructure that had been set up across the KIO enclaves and the world outside Myanmar. Working under provisions made by the Burmese Private Tuition Law of 1964 that enabled teaching of limited subjects (but, crucially, not full curriculum), others were able to extend into government-controlled areas like Myitkyina. Supported by a gradual change inside Myanmar and an increasingly favourable geopolitical context in the early years of the new millennium, a new generation of privately-run educational projects gradually established themselves with greater institutional consistency. Instrumental in this have been individual efforts of those educators who were able to establish and sustain international links and credibility, as well as garner sufficient support within their own communities. I argue that, unlike in many private schools in Asia and Myanmar today, their efforts constitute more than profitable business ventures or community development projects. Implicitly, their work addresses a particular set of social and political grievances endemic in Myanmar today, thus constituting an important form of local critique.

Through personal and institutional histories as well as ethnographic examples from my own work with several schools, the chapter discusses why and how the younger generation of Kachin educators trained abroad choose to pool their efforts and resources into private initiatives. I shall begin by briefly touching upon the theoretical significance of private education in the Kachin State for the wider regional context. From there, I move to the story of an individual teacher whose career choices exemplify the rationale behind the increased popularity of private schooling in the Kachin areas. His aims have been concurrently nationalistic and individualist, something that characterised a number of educators I came to know in this context. I have chosen his example as representative because while his practice is equally aimed at greater personal autonomy and income, it is also animated by visions of ethno-national development common to many of his Kachin colleagues. He came from a theological background, and local Christian organisations greatly

supported his professional development. Despite this, he chose to build his career outside of the clergy, a move characteristic of several other educators with whom I worked. I expand on his example by providing several vignettes of different private schools in Myitkyina. Their position is highly complex for they are having to negotiate a number of difficult, often conflicting institutional relationships, while at the same time working towards their own visions of national development in the autonomous space for action they have created. What emerges from these examples is the importance of historical legacies for contemporary schooling, and the central role of strong individual initiative. The final case examined in this chapter develops the argument of individual initiative and critique one step further. I show how a privately-run mission school in Laiza has recently opted to shift its long-term goals away from Myanmar's higher education altogether. This move has occurred in response to deficiencies and contradictions in the latter as perceived by the school's administrators. What makes this a particularly important example is the fact that these developments have been closely monitored by the KIO and might well have set a precedent for institutional restructuring on a much larger scale. This introduces the issue of fragmentation, discussed in the following chapter, that the militarised politics of Nay Pyi Daw have fuelled in the Kachin State, and how marginalisation, pushed to its extreme, can eventually give rise to independent formations. The agency behind these remains a productive force, able to challenge and transform the larger apparatus of schooling of which it is a part.

Private schooling in Asia and Myanmar

Recent scholarship has drawn attention to the increasing prominence of private schooling in both Asia (Mok 2011; Umakoshi 2004) and Myanmar (Lall 2008; Lorch 2008).[25] This rise is commonly seen as part of the devolution of social responsibilities by the state, and an increasing commodification of social relations in general. As its object of critique, this analytical framework is ultimately concerned with a strictly economic rationale. The emerging privatised field is broadly seen as catering to two opposing ends of the income spectrum. First, there are schools for the wealthiest

25 It should be noted that these processes are in no way limited to Asian contexts. As Stephen Ball, among others, has shown, increasing privatisation of mass education is a much wider trend in the contemporary world (2007).

segments of the society or the emerging high middle-classes. These institutions are generally able to afford highly qualified teaching staff, better infrastructure and teaching materials. This, is turn, tends to lead to more varied and progressive teaching methodologies. Consequently, many schools in this segment outperform their national counterparts in even well-functioning economies. In severely underdeveloped countries like Myanmar, private schooling can often stand in such stark contrast to the centralised system, one can doubt whether the aims of the two really fit under the same category. An example of this would be the successful for-profit Victory English centre in Myitkyina. Opposite those elite establishments stand the second type of private initiatives. These are schools, like English 4 Life (see Chapter 1), striving to offer the chance of supplementary education or tuition classes to the most vulnerable segments of society, defined by lower economic status or marginalised ethnic and religious belonging. Whether operated by local or foreign staff, such schools tend to rely on support from donors and whatever fees the poor families of attending students can afford.

While I recognise the value of an economic perspective on these processes, the present work seeks to expand on this by examining the political significance of emergent private schools in the Kachin State. As already suggested, formal schooling is generally seen as the foremost institution for political socialisation. As Bénéï succinctly notes, "the kind of nation desired by the state determines the kind of education it imparts" (2008, 19). In this sense, education is recognised as *re*-producing particular ideologies and, in the final analysis, subjectification in society. However, formal schooling has also been instrumental in other fields (e.g. religious socialisation) as well as being productive of resistance and change. It is of no small theoretical importance that, although this chapter focuses on non-state institutions, the leaders of those schools have been brought up through different forms of state-schooling. This is why it is crucial to fully appreciate the complexities of the educational apparatuses of contemporary Myanmar, as well as fields external to them that impart their own particular influence. Free from centralised control and largely operating outside state gaze, private initiatives studied here are thus no less important than their larger counterparts. This is in great part because the two remain implicated in crucial processes of interaction and exchange. Whether it is to

produce alternative political visions, or to question existing institutional hierarchies, private schools constitute important agents of change in the contemporary Kachin society.

Samuel, Myitkyina

I begin with an example of an individual educator. Although the nature of his practice differs somewhat from that of bigger Kachin private schools, this difference has more to do with scale than content. What I wish to outline are the biographical trajectories that led him to his present position, as well as the values informing his pedagogic outlook, which show marked similarities to a great number of educators I worked with. His example allows me to sketch out several problematics woven through this thesis. These include the marginalisation affecting Kachin communities in the politically fragmented spaces of Kachin State (Chapter 3); the significant (if sometimes contested) role of Christian organisations in the social sphere (Chapters 6 and 7); the rigid status hierarchies that shape educational practice (Chapter 5); and nationalist sentiments stirred in response to unaddressed grievances of the Kachin populace (Chapter 4). The present discussion illustrates how these processes affect the choices of individual educators to build alternative institutions in the private sphere, necessarily and intentionally intertwined with larger existing bodies, yet also seeking partial autonomy from them. In those efforts, I argue, can be found a complex form of critique through pedagogic practice.

I first met Samuel in late 2010 when he was working for the NHTOI programme in Myitkyina. A man of small stature and gentle voice, his appearance belied a commanding presence in class. He was among the most respected private tuition teachers in Myitkyina and his reputation had helped kick-start small organisations like NHTOI. Over time, I came to regard Samuel's person as bearing similarities to the mentality of many Kachin educators. Like them, he had long been working towards independence from established institutions while supporting the preservation of Kachin language and culture. His formative years, too, were somewhat typical of other Kachin intellectuals of his generation. His family's poverty had derailed Samuel's plans for securing a college education early on. Not as fluent in Burmese as native speakers, he often recalled falling behind other

students, a situation he saw as the principal educational inequality in the Kachin State. Having to constantly find casual labour to make ends meet, his class attendance was irregular, particularly in secondary school. This, together with his family's lack of experience in and interest for higher education, disqualified him from local colleges in his early twenties when most of his peers enrolled.

Samuel lamented spending years "without proper goals in life". Like many, he claims to have finally been spurred to action by his national consciousness. I have already commented on the political stalemate that followed the ceasefire of 1994 and the way it came to weigh on the Kachin society. This, together with deteriorating living conditions across the Kachin State in the 1990s, made him reconsider his earlier choices. Unfit for military service due to his constitution, he sought other avenues which eventually led him to education as a tool to "develop the nation".

> *Of course I needed employment. But I also felt I wanted to help my Kachin people. I wanted to help develop our nation. So I decided to study English. We needed it for every kinds of thing* [sic]. *Without English, how can we achieve something? The Burmese are too clever for us. So we need to work with other people directly. I knew this so I wanted to make a difference.*

Yet he was soon faced with a problem. Due to his age he could no longer enter government colleges, even if his average grades would have allowed him to. As it was for many of his compatriots, his principal option remained a career in theology. Not only were entrance requirements more relaxed, but he could count on employment and considerable prestige after graduation. Eventually, Samuel enrolled at the best seminary in the region, the Mandalay Institute of Theology or MIT. Things changed. He stood out for his intelligence and experience in the seminary. His performance was such that he was eventually awarded a rare opportunity to continue his studies in Thailand. His considerable intellectual ambitions led him to choose linguistics at Payap University in Chiang Mai. Yet barely two years into his studies, his uncompromising character would lead to a falling out with the institution that had taken him there.

> *I got into a disagreement with the leaders of our* [KBC] *Literary Committee. They had decided that I should be a translator. They wanted me to start translating*

literature, especially the Bible, into Kachin. But this is easy work! You don't need degree people to do that. Anyone can speak Kachin! I wanted to teach English to really change our community. To bring people out of darkness and into the light! With English you can work with different people...

The discord went to the extent that Samuel resolved to cut short his degree and return home to Myanmar. As he recalled it, this decision was underpinned by several considerations. In his patriotism, he believed he could improve the Kachin society "from the grassroots up". He had failed his studies, yes, but he also felt that life in Chiang Mai had perfected his grasp of English enough to grant him employment as a language teacher. This perception was shared by others back home. Rather than joining any of the established schools he began giving private tuition classes and soon found himself teaching small classrooms of individual students. It is important to note that, on one level, this outcome was due to official limitations. Without a certified degree in the Burmese system, finding employment in government schools would have been impossible. Likewise, his row with the KBC barred him from seeking employment with them directly even if he had wanted to. Notably, he also chose to stay out of the KIO educational apparatus. Thus, while his choice was certainly made on ideological grounds that saw him fighting for the Kachin cause, his had also chosen to work independently of existing institutional structures.

Throughout the years, Samuel had kept a conservative attitude towards methodology. "The most important thing is building good character. I want to make them into good people, better people. I teach manners and motivation. This is why my students are different", he told me one late night in 2012, as we were discussing the recent government offensive and the role of educators in the conflict. Like the wide majority of language teachers in Myanmar, Samuel focuses almost exclusively on grammar. "Some teachers take 10 minutes for jokes, 15 for introduction, 5 for songs and so on… this is a useless method! From the beginning, I wanted to make it different. I make them work *real* hard". Samuel's former students would shudder thinking back to the times when they failed to meet his expectations. Living on campus for the NHTOI programme, he would get up at 5am every morning and be

adamantly waiting in class by 5:30am. "He never said that you must be at your desk before he entered. You just knew" a former student recalled. The day would proceed by rote after rote of grammatical exercises and always end with hours of homework. In many ways, Samuel's methods remained similar to those of his Burmese colleagues. Yet his outlook towards the *ends* of education was markedly different, likening him to many of his Kachin colleagues. While progress of each individual student was certainly important, their performance would always relate to wider problems of developing the Kachin as an independent nation. This was true both in terms of maintaining a separate identity and working towards a political solution. His commitment to comprehensive change was also attested to by the fact that he would insist on spending as much time outside of class with his students as possible. During his time at NHTOI, for example, he would insist on football matches and late night bonfires with informal conversations steeped in the *Jinghpaw Wunpawng* nationalism.

Nawng E Hku Mission School, Laiza

I now turn to another example wherein Kachin educators have chosen to invest in separate institutional structures in order to realise their particular visions of development. This case is particularly important because the school in question is located in the KIO capital of Laiza and has strong ties to the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC). Yet its management has opted for autonomy from both larger organisations in order to introduce radical curricular reforms that may have significant long-term implications well beyond its confines. The historical emergence and present aspirations of Nawng E Hku Mission School illustrate that even in the territorially compact and outwardly homogenous KIO enclaves, one encounters highly complex institutional formations. Though dependent on individual initiative, these formations are trans-local and very adaptive to external opportunities and pressures.

Like NHTOI, Nawng E Hku Mission School traces its origins to one particularly influential local strongman, Reverend Nhkum Doi La. Few outsiders would think to associate the present figure of the lieutenant colonel of New Democratic Army

– Kachin (NDA-K) with the most progressive primary school in Laiza.[26] Yet before Nhkum Doi La's falling out with the KIO in the early 2000s, one of his many professions was a secondary school principal. Among the thousands of intellectuals who fled the SLORC-controlled areas after the 1988 revolution, Rev. Doi La arrived in Laiza with a group of Kachin student activists that same year. He soon established a mission school in what was then little more than a sizeable Kachin refugee camp on the Chinese border surrounded by KIA encampments. In a few years, the KIO had established Laiza as one of its central strongholds and the camp grew steadily into a town in its own right. However, tensions soon flared between the increasingly influential Rev. Doi La and the KIO's senior leadership over local politics. In 1992, when the KIO Education Department sought greater centralisation across the area, the mission compound was nationalised as Laiza Secondary School.

Cast out, Rev. Doi La was forced to start afresh in the village of Woi Chyai, about a kilometre north of Laiza. In what was still a wild jungle at the time, he and his followers deforested the sizeable plot for a new schoolhouse and a church. In the hills above, a small orphanage was founded for the victims of the war. However, the activities of the Reverend were hardly limited to these efforts. An excellent orator and social critic, he was gradually building a base of political support and making enemies among his rivals. Before long, even his presence on the outskirts of Laiza came to trouble the KIO. When he was finally banished, Rev. Doi La fled to Pang Wa where, having cast off the last vestiges of a cleric, he made an overnight rise to the rank of lieutenant colonel of the NDA-K. I was suggested by several educators in Laiza that Rev. Doi La had used formal schooling as one of his many paths to political power. Few relationships in the contemporary Kachin society command as much obedience as that between a student and his or her teacher, particularly if the latter belongs to the clergy (see Chapter 5 below). Yet one should not overlook the

26 Led by Gen. Zahkung Ting Ying, the New Democratic Army – Kachin (NDA-K) was a former splinter group of the KIA that, on June 24th 2009, merged with tatmadaw's controversial Border Guard Force (BGF) (see Map 3). The group first separated from the KIA in 1968 as the Division 101 of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). On December 15th 1989, shortly after adopting its new name, a permanent peace agreement was signed with the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The group was henceforth known to have shifted its activities to mining and other business ventures. Significant parts of the territory under NDA-K control are known to rely on poppy cultivation for subsistence, a practice formally outlawed in KIO areas since 1990, but still common along the Sino- Myanmar border in general.

fact that his was also one of the earliest attempts at privatizing formal education in KIO areas. The precedent Doi La set, as well as the scarce resources that had been left behind, have enabled younger activists to resume the project on their own terms.

Today, the unfenced gate of Nawng E Hku Mission School is reached by a well-paved road leading up from Laiza's centre towards the rolling hills dotted with military posts and lookouts. The sizeable compound overlooks the Chinese border, literally a stone's throw across the narrow riverbed to the west. The road itself is busy with trucks hauling raw timber and stone to the traders waiting on the Chinese side. Every now and then a herd of water buffalo descends, driven from the hills to the Chinese fields and butcher houses. Hardy Honda Dreams whizz children and soldiers between homesteads, classrooms and the ever-shifting front. Back on the school grounds, one encounters a similar sense of industry. The main building that presently houses classrooms for the first six grades has stood for years, but several plots around it seem to be constantly awaiting new constructions. Despite a period of heavy fighting around Laiza between my visits in 2012 and 2013, a large boarding house for teachers had been erected and another two were awaiting concrete foundations. Already an area had been allotted for an even bigger building to cater to prospective secondary school classes. The meticulously kept school farm sported a pigsty and two fish farms.

At the time of my research, the steadily growing enrolment numbered 250 students taught by 15 teachers. This is a notably small teacher-student ratio for a region where 50 to 60 student classes are not uncommon. Being KIO territory, almost all the students were Kachin, save for a few of half-Han descent who spoke Jinghpaw. The children were expected to render a small tuition fee to support the running costs, but the school relied on larger donations for its expansion. These mostly came from Kachin elites, but some Chinese benefactors were also said to have supported the school in recent years. Nawng E Hku also manages an orphanage high on the hillside above the school. Overlooking the picturesque valleys around Laiza, it is home to some dozen students who attend regular classes and are supported from the school's annual budget. By 2013, the orphanage too had received new lodgings.

Illustration 1
The main building of Nawng E Hku Mission School in Laiza
Fall, 2012

The steep roads leading up to it were in the process of being reinforced and fitted with drainage ahead of the rainy season. In sum, despite the raging war, Nawng E Hku had kept expanding. Apart for a week during the shelling of central Laiza schoolwork followed its regular rhythm. Yet what makes Nawng E Hku such an interesting case is more than its considerable pedagogic industry. It is a telling example of a striving for institutional autonomy in a highly complex political landscape. Despite its size and central location, it remains outside the purview of the KIO Education Office. This fact, emerging from complex trajectories of individual and organisational histories, has allowed its current leadership to express their vision for educational development through highly innovative, if risky, reforms.

As I discuss in Chapter 4 below, one of the most significant effects of the 1994 ceasefire for schooling in KIO areas was the semi-formal agreement for cooperation with the Ministry of Education of the former State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Ideally, its content enabled students from KIO areas to enrol in colleges

across the country. In practical terms, this often meant also sitting the final eleventh grade in a government secondary school. The principal cost of this arrangement was that the KIO was fully subjected to the Burmese curriculum across its own schooling. Its educational apparatus, including the newly founded Teachers Training College in Mai Ja Yang, had few alternatives besides orienting itself to the demands of planners in Yangon. Thus, while the KIO could exercise de facto sovereignty over its territorial domains, the organisation had very limited control over the curricular content of its nominally independent schooling system, adding a further layer of complexity to the fragmented borderworlds. This fact is crucial when discussing the subsequent emergence of alternative educational initiatives in the Kachin society.

One essentially political problem that confronted Kachin educators in the new millennium was wresting control of a system that had gained nominal autonomy but, in actual practice, was still heavily dependent on its Burmese counterpart. As already noted, the outdated and dysfunctional curriculum used by Myanmar's central schooling remained wrought with a number of problems that were not lost to the more progressively-minded educators in Kachinland. Curricular content and teaching methods were felt to be at odds with local needs and readings of history.

Centralisation remained highly inflexible and inefficient. They were acutely conscious of the fact that the Myanmar system was largely lacking in international credibility, trapping its students within the country; double entrapment, as Dean would call it (2002). At the same time, the already scarce career opportunities that higher education offered to Burmese graduates would be cut even further for other ethnic nationalities. Perceived marginalisation resulting from this was summed up in the words of a Kachin expatriate teacher in Chiang Mai in early 2012.

> *The ceasefire was giving Kachin nothing but slowly taking everything. The KIO could do so little. They lack forward-looking* [attitude]*, especially in education. So for them, it's a kind of waiting for no solution.*

Illustration 2
By early 2013, bomb shelters like this had become a common element in Laiza's urban landscape. Pictured here is a shelter hurriedly built by the teachers of Nawng E Hku in the wake of aerial shelling of Laiza March, 2013 Laiza

For those who had lived through the realities of the ceasefire period in enclaves straddling the Sino-Burmese border, the implications of being landlocked against China were all too obvious. Though offering limited economic opportunities, it was increasingly clear that no tangible support would be forthcoming from Beijing for the political aspirations of smaller ethnic nationalities in Myanmar. This is significant in view of the developmental mentality alluded to before. Though aspirations of individual students were certainly valued, for the young educators discussed here, the ultimate concern was collective progress of the Kachin nation, as noted above. It is against this background that their divergence from established systems of formal education must be understood. Whether searching for greater autonomy from the Burmese educational apparatus, its influence over KIO schooling, or the excessive influence of Christian elites over intellectual life described in the previous chapter, their actions offer telling examples of institutional critique in the local context.

One of those who dared to question the post-ceasefire status quo was a young KBC minister from Laiza. Naw Hkawng's father died when he was only seven years old and he was brought up by his mother and older sister. In the tightly knit kinship structure of the Kachin society, that made him a unlikely candidate for high social status. When Naw Hkawng was nine years old, his mother was briefly arrested by the government and he spent months living on his own, since his sister was studying in Myitkyina. "I think that this is when I lost my sharp mind. I used to be very clever before that. But the shock of suddenly being all alone was too big" he humbly recalls, thinking back to those formative years. He spent his early years doing hard casual labour to support the family who was sharing a tiny bamboo hut with him on the outskirts of Laiza. Naw Hkawng received the bulk of his schooling in Laiza but was sent to attend the final grade in Myitkyina with a partial scholarship that the KIO offered to Laiza students at the time. During my final visit to Nawng E Hku, he recalled the effects of this brief policy change and how it enabled him to continue upon his return.

> *It wasn't much but without it I would not have managed at all. Before my matriculation exam I had never been out of Laiza. My Burmese was very poor and I had great difficulties settling in. But if I had not gotten out of Laiza then, I could never have started Nawng E Hku. They* [the KIO] *would have said something, you know, I would have not been good enough.*

His final exam grades were mediocre and thus kept him from enrolling at local state universities. As it was for Samuel, the one option still open to him was the Kachin Theological College (KTC) in Myitkyina. He was accepted and soon made a name for himself among his teachers and fellow students. In particular, his enthusiasm in the pulpit made him gain in reputation. With the help of some high-ranking benefactors, he was eventually granted a scholarship for further theological studies in India. Naw Hkawng claims that it was only there, in Nagaland, that his future plans for the nation started to take shape. He was thoroughly impressed by the English curriculum used in the local schools, as well as what he perceived as the success of Naga political elites vis-à-vis the Indian government.

> *I saw, every day, that Nagaland is very developed compared to us. They are very*

educated and have managed to demand the government for support. Their English is very good, even in primary school. Despite their accent [laughing]. *It is there that I understood that to serve my people I have to do it through education. I understood that this is the only way we can develop and prayed God's for blessing. This is the only way we can do, you know? There is nothing else.*

Returning from Nagaland, Naw Hkawng literally hauled the first batch of English textbooks for primary grades on his back through the jungle. As the next chapter explains in more detail, this carried significant risks at the time. The books would have been highly suspicious for their origin, written in English and in Christian idiom – enough to alert most Burmese checkpoints.

On the train to Mandalay, an officer asked me, 'What's in the bags?' I was so scared but told him these were just regular textbooks. 'Please have a look', I said, but I was really scared! That day, somehow, the Lord gave me His blessing and the officer never opened the bags. If he had seen what they were, he would know I was from KIO areas. I could have been in jail.

Another obstacle lay in winning local support for the project in Laiza. What his plans prescribed was nothing less than dropping the Burmese curriculum in which so much energy had been invested over the years, and substituting an English one from India that people neither knew nor were able to deliver. This bold change held long-term implications. Namely, graduates wanting to pursue further studies would be barred from enrolling at Burmese colleges, still a tangible option at the time. The alternative, which Naw Hkawng embraced, was attending one across the border in India.

I saw that the old way was useless. There is no future for us with Burma. We tried that before and all fails. We need to look outside. India is very close and the government there is better. Nagas are clever and they get big support from the [Indian] *government. Here we get nothing but bullets! So with the help of the Lord I want to help my people get good education in Nagaland. This is what we really need so that we can develop, you see?*

Initially, the KIO Education Office spurned his plans outright. "They told me that

this would definitely fail. Mainly because our students were not intelligent enough", Naw Hkawng recounted. Having met opposition from the Education Office, he reached out to the other major political force in the Kachin society, convincing the local KBC committee to shoulder his project. A few wealthy relatives further supported him through patronage and individual donations. As with Samuel, his theological background was largely instrumental in actualizing his plans. He commanded academic credentials from the Christian establishment that gave him prestige and certain political leverage. His committed involvement in local community life, primarily through religious service, meant that he had deep-seated networks and that people would more easily trust in his vision. In January 2011 (following the Indian academic year, rather than the Burmese), Nawng E Hku began its first year as an English-medium primary school.

When I returned to Laiza in April 2013 after almost two years of absence, initial attitudes towards Nawng E Hku had changed considerably. Tellingly, several children of the KIO's top tier were now attending the school. Lunching at a small military outpost en route to Laiza, General Gun Maw himself pressed me for an opinion on Naw Hkawng and his school. Even more significantly, Sumlut Gam, the General Secretary of the KIO Education Department, admitted that the KIO was considering orienting its own schooling away from Myanmar, towards India and China. There was already a joint-study programme in Kunming funded by the Yunnan provincial government, accepting dozens of Kachin students to a university in Kunming. Though this was not acknowledged, Nawng E Hku had earlier linked with a comparable programme in Nagaland. Given the fact that after the start of the war in 2011, all communication with the Ministry of Education in Nay Pyi Daw broke down, such a change in orientation is highly telling. Considering the bureaucratic limbo current graduates of KIO schools find themselves in, with no chance of enrolment in colleges and universities inside Myanmar, there is perceived need for viable alternatives for the future. As the General Secretary himself reiterated, prolonged conflict without political solution can only further alienate schooling in KIO areas from the rest of Myanmar. It shows that Nay Pyi Daw's disproportionate use of force to quench political opposition in the Kachin State has not only created a humanitarian disaster, but is also transforming institutional

structures in ways that further undermine its sovereignty.

NHOI Education Centre, Myitkyina

For Nawng E Hku, the main point of contention was the stagnated educational policies of two state actors in the region. The example of NHTOI Education Centre in Myitkyina brings us to another point of tension in the field of Kachin schooling, which is that concerning the authority of Christian elites. On one level, it highlights the dependence of civil society initiatives on powerful ecclesiastical organisations (most notably, the KBC). This is particularly true following the political infighting, described in Chapter 5, which cut its funding from the private sector. My aim is to show how the educators navigate the changing political environment, carving out more space for independent action from both Christian organisations and the state. It is crucial to note that the people described here are rarely opposing the clergy on grounds of faith or ideology. Not only are the majority deeply religious, but they are also staunchly supportive of Kachin Christian nationalism. Rather, their resistance should be seen as negotiating for authority in matters pertaining to what they perceive as secular dimensions of social development. Before giving a brief overview of the school and its proclaimed goals, I shall outline the position of Christian organisations.

Following Jose Casanova's argument (1994), Christianity in the contemporary Kachin society certainly remains a public religion without any seriously competing alternatives, apart from the resurgent but still relatively marginal neo-animist movement. Institutionally, it is highly politicised and maintains an integrative function for different social fields. It is in light of this that the current relationship of private schools in the Kachin State to religious organisations such as the KBC becomes particularly interesting. Thinking back to the Barthian notion of ethnicity as essentially self-ascriptive, it would be difficult for most Kachin to define their ethnic belonging outside the Christian frame of reference. For local organisations working towards national development and social aims, this becomes a crucial normative boundary.

Economically, religious organisations remain indispensable for many private schools. Major Christian organisations in the Kachin State represent the only local

source of funding apart from individual donors. The KBC, in particular, possesses significant holdings in useable real estate. Through a carefully managed system of tithes, roughly one-tenth of the income of all adult members in their respective congregations make up the revenue of local Christian churches. These resources can be freely allocated for educational projects deemed worthy by local church councils, in the case of protestant denominations, or by the diocese in Catholic communities. For those educators without personal connections in the business sector this remains one of the few sources of external funding available. Smaller programmes, such as NHTOI, find their starting capital in the form of housing or classrooms in church compounds and are often provided food and lodgings for the volunteer teachers by organisations such as the KBC.

Symbolically, affiliation with religious organisations provides schools with social credibility and connections. Seen as morally uncorrupted and safe, such programmes retain high appeal in the predominantly Christian society that has seen surging levels of drug abuse and HIV infections in the last decade (the latter at roughly 16 times the national average) (Mizzima 2010). In terms of networking, parishes provide valuable publicity amongst their respective communities and beyond. It appears that religious affiliation can also bestow some bureaucratic benefits in terms of more relaxed governmental inquiries into their activities (something that contradicts the popular assumption of religious persecution of Christian organisations by the state). Finally, church leaders command a reputation as an intellectual vanguard in the Kachin society. Following the 1960s, centralised education became increasingly distant from any church-led activities (see Chapter 4 below). Constrained to following the state curriculum to the letter, even the best Kachin educators working in government schools could hardly aspire to the status of national elites. Unlike that of church leaders, moreover, their work always benefitted the society at large with no clear preference for their ethnic brethren. The threat of losing their already meagre salaries distanced them from any association with the KIO, thus marginalizing their relative status even further. This is important for understanding why, despite thousands of ethnic Kachin teachers having worked in government schools throughout the civil war years, they rarely command the reputation afforded to some of the famed educators from seminary backgrounds.

The ideological summation of tradition and Christianity that underpins the national identity of the contemporary Kachin has made organisations such as the KBC and the Catholic Church into both guardians of and an authority on local folklore, customs and, most importantly, language. Working under the wing of either the KBC or the Catholic Church seems equally expected of and beneficial to most private educational programmes targeting Kachin youth. It is therefore something of a conundrum that several small programmes recently started in Myitkyina with which I worked over the past two years were actually trying to lay distance between themselves and the KBC. This is especially so considering the fact that both their leadership and student bodies consist of more or less devout believers. After giving a brief description of the school settings and proclaimed goals, the sections below delve deeper into the problem.

Hidden away on one of the quiet side streets in central Myitkyina lies a school that Tu Ja and his colleagues started as a replacement for the now defunct Pan Kachin College. Apart from one discreet plaque on the front façade, there is little to give away the intended purpose of the compound. Past a squeaky iron gate, however, one notices rare whiteboards on the classroom walls, a small well-stocked library of English books, and several sets of heavy wooden desks with matching benches. Though relatively modest by outside standards, NHTOI's possibilities trump most regular classrooms in the Kachin State.

NHTOI's proclaimed goal has been training local youth for taking the TOEFL English exam and assisting them with applying to foreign universities. Somewhat less conspicuously, subjects like Kachin culture and democracy education figure in the curriculum. The majority of pupils came from KIO-controlled areas, but there were also those from other parts of the Kachin and Shan states. As such, the programme presented a crucial bridging effort linking the students from KIO enclaves to the wider world. At the time of my research, around twenty participating students were selected annually through a loose competency test in English. In addition to the test, a letter of recommendation from one's local church minister was required to support an application, showing the complexity of the institutional relations underpinning the initiative. In theory, students were accepted

from any Christian denomination (or none), but in reality, all but a handful were Baptists and the rest Roman Catholics. The students paid a tuition fee that has increased steadily throughout the years from 100 USD to 250 USD per semester (a considerable but by no means extortionate sum by local standards). Despite being secondary school or university graduates, those enrolled were required to live on campus and needed to apply for permission to leave even for short periods (a practice, as shown in the next chapter, which would often protect students without proper identity documents).

Since its inception, the scope of the programme had expanded quite rapidly. In addition to the 8 month main programme, several smaller auxiliary courses were added that offer English and civic education on introductory levels. All of them are run on church compounds of neighbouring parishes. This last fact again highlights the constant need for educators to negotiate access to students through local churches and vice versa. At its inception, NHTOI's main programme was nominally run under the auspices of the KBC's Youth Department. This provided financial assistance in the form of housing and, perhaps more importantly, gave much-needed legitimacy to the young educators. "Nobody took us seriously at the time", Brawng Awng, one of the present leaders of the school, explains, "but when people heard that it is KBC programme they felt safe to send their sons and daughters". Christian organisations have long commanded significant moral and intellectual authority in the Kachin society. It is this authority that educators can choose to co-opt as, in fact, NHTOI did. However, in such partnerships, far more is at stake than prestige. In practical terms, they allow educators professing wide-ranging visions for national development to operate in complex geographical settings. In population centres like Myitkyina, church backing shelters them from overt state gaze. In the rural hinterlands, Christian networks allow for greater reach, helping draw in students from widely disparate and isolated settings. They also provide crucial infrastructure.

Over the four year period since its beginnings, NHTOI's campus changed location three times. When I was first asked to volunteer as an English teacher back in 2010, the first academic year for the programme, the classrooms were located on the sizeable KBC compound in Myitkyina. Two classrooms had been set aside behind

the private residence of the General Secretary of the KBC, Sr. Rev. Samsun. By the following year, another compound was chosen to accommodate the students and make the enterprise more self-reliant. The new grounds, still owned by the KBC, were on the outskirts of Myitkyina. Some way off the shoddy highway, in between fields and a small oil palm plantation, lay several purpose-built bamboo houses. The smallest accommodated the resident staff, another one housed a classroom, a library and a lunchroom with a small kitchen. There were also two separate dormitories for men and women. It is significant that the campus housed the teachers with the students. Though relatively common in schools across Myanmar, the insistence of school leadership here was to provide oversight of the student body around the clock, as well as to extend their development through pedagogic practice beyond classes per se. A dusty football field provided evening entertainment for both staff and students. The same was true for singing or, more rarely, watching Chinese or American blockbusters. Yet it is the last move of the compound that bears most relevance for the present discussion. I have elsewhere shown the extent to which private educators would cooperate with (and depend on) dominant Christian organisations. However, in the case presented here, this relationship was not without important tensions. Though at first sight, relocation into central Myitkyina in early 2013 could be seen as mere convenience, its implicit and equally substantive reason lay in bid for further autonomy from the KBC.

A good example of how the authority of church elders is being enacted – and resisted – in the contemporary landscape of education could be drawn from an open forum that was held in Myitkyina in November 2012. The stated purpose of the forum was to discuss the future of Jinghpaw language education in the Kachin state. As such, it was one of a few but notable public displays of constructive resistance to decades of heavy-fisted Burmanisation in the central education system. As I discuss in more detail below, the present constitution nominally guarantees linguistic rights of most ethnic nationalities living in Myanmar but tangible efforts at enforcing this are only beginning to emerge.[27]

The forum was attended by a sizable and mixed audience, comprising of local

27 One crucial exception being the Rohingya.

teachers, school principals, civil society activists and other interested parties. The speakers, on the other hand, were church elders who had been invited to offer their learned opinions on the future of equitable education. Though the event was advertised as an open forum, my Kachin colleagues in attendance were struck by the placement of the room that set the speakers against the audience, not unlike, they said, ministers in front of a congregation. Telling here is not the actual organization of the room that hardly differed from most public events, academic or otherwise, that I visited in Myanmar. Rather, it was the fact that my colleagues perceived it as emulating spatial ordering of churches that drew attention to tensions over public performances. Yet as the evening progressed, their concerns were given more substance, as one religious statement dragged on after another. Even when the public was offered a chance to ask questions, the convenor remained facing the front, all but ignoring voices from the audience and divesting the latter from any chance of probing their questions further. Often, inquiries into specific plans for action or a particular change in policy would be downplayed by a disarming "It's in God's hands, if he wills it the situation shall improve", or a suggestion to proceed by praying harder.

When I later discussed the evening with a couple of educators from NHTOI, they remained sharply critical of the organisers. In particular, they lamented the lack of professional expertise of the speakers whose opinions, nonetheless, were presented as a learned assessment of the prevailing state of local schooling. "These guys, they know nothing about education! They never attended anything but theology school. And now they speak like they know everything! And we, who have education, and are working in education, don't get a word! I tried to ask questions several times but the chairperson would not even look at me…", was how Brang Awng summed the event.

Such explicit pronouncements towards elderly clergymen are fairly uncommon amongst the Kachin. Most youth do not necessarily enjoy the long winding speeches, but they seldom argue outright against the content. Readily apparent in Brang Awng's disavowal is the malcontent felt by a newer, self-assured generation towards the old guard. There was a clear sense of preference for institutionally certified academic knowledge, a common trump held by the younger generation,

against experience and age of established elites. There is also the issue of inclusiveness that comes up in so many of the current arguments against the traditional conduct of educational affairs. Most importantly, however, this rejection signifies a demarcation of the religious field by those whose see themselves as disassociated from its institutional sway. This is not to say that the latter would not identify themselves as Christians. We would regularly attend Sunday services, sing the hymns with fellow churchgoers, and pay our tithes with every other respect to the clergy. But the change in attitude that this brief exchange exemplifies is that toward superiority of pedagogical expertise *in matters of education* against the morally-premised authority of religious elites. In this sense, it is important to differentiate the attitudes described above from what Harding describes in representations of American fundamentalist "others" (1991). Rather, the Kachin educators were negotiating for greater space for autonomous action while retaining commitment to dominant religious identities. In other words, what was being negotiated through their critique of the event was not the Christian identity of self or community but the field of knowledge and education [*hpaji*].

A couple of months after the said forum, NHTOI started its fifth academic year. The preparations leading up to the opening ceremony gave more flesh to the attitudes described above. All public (and most private) ceremonies among the contemporary Kachin are presided over by the local clergy. The latter initiate the proceedings, provide topical counsel and advice from the Scriptures, and bestow their blessing on the enterprise and those in attendance. Hymns are repeatedly sung at intermissions; voices are joined in prayer and reciting of verses. Bulging envelopes always change hands at the end of such occasions, constituting the financial duty of organisers towards the clergy. Holding any kind of ceremony without ecclesiastical presence would be considered an affront and would not go unnoticed by the community or the church.

Thus, when Brang Awng announced that he would not only have a person unaffiliated with the KBC lead the opening ceremony for the school but also forego all customary payments, his decision stemmed from more than a "lack of budget" he gave as formal rationale. In fact, in its fifth year of operation, NHTOI's funding had been better than ever. Despite relocating to a new campus and other related

expenses, paying the clergy would hardly have been beyond school's capacity. Nor could the decision be explained away by the fact that the move coincided with NHTOI's formal separation from KBC tutelage. NHTOI had indeed become a nominally independent organisation, but this would not, by itself, absolve them from formal tithes or other responsibilities of the laity.

The ceremony itself played out rather differently from the usual. Unlike the year before, when even the General Secretary of the KBC, Rev. Samsun, attended the graduation, the bulk of invitations sent out to the KBC were ignored and the clerical board leading the ceremony assembled from a few smaller denominations such as the Reformed Anglican Church. Though the afternoon progressed in a jovial atmosphere, not a few of the guests remained puzzled at its organisation afterwards. Some remarked on the unorthodoxy of the main speech by Sr. Kha Lum, where "but a single verse was read from the scripture and it was one that everyone knew by heart [Pro. 23:13]", while others were surprised by the lack of high-profile guests. These as well as other peculiarities were reflected upon in hindsight amongst parents and others attendees. So what, one might ask, led the young acting principal to choose the said path, especially considering the high stakes of prestige and support involved?

We had spoken on the issue of church leadership in the society on numerous occasions over the past years. Brang Awng had always maintained a critical stance towards their unquestioned sway in what he took to be a rightfully secular sphere. He was respectful of tradition and clerical authority in what he perceived as "religious matters". He argued, however, that the hierarchy based on age and social capital that characterised church institutions, rather than individual merit and professional competence set barriers for national development of the Kachin. What was objected to in this and several other interviews was the institutional mechanism that gave church officials with lifelong tenure an authority in all matters pertaining to public life. In addition to opposing clerical authority in administrative matters, an argument for more secular ends of education emerged. Brawng Awng was among a number of young educators who would often lament the brain drain effectuated on their society by theological schools.

> *What we* [the Kachin society] *need is more secular education! We have too many church men! The church draws young people because it guarantees status and employment. But you know what? Those who go to KTC are mostly failures!*

He proceeded to give an example of his close friend's brother who, upon finishing secondary school, came to be enrolled in a prestigious medical school in Lower Myanmar.

> *Everyone was happy for him at first and his parents invested a lot of money in his education. But things turned out different. You see, these days, the campus around the medical school is surrounded by* [internet] *game shops. Maybe it is a plot by the government? This is the only medical school where Kachin students can study. Anyway, students are lured into these shops and become addicted. It's like drugs, you know?*

Having allegedly spent his nights and days hooked online the young medical student eventually failed the term exam and was promptly expelled from the school. Despite the shame he returned to his hometown and spent a jobless year living with his parents. His father eventually sent him to Thailand to seek employment as a migrant worker. According to Brawng Awng, another year went by in hardship without the man finding any permanent employment. Penniless, he and his new Han-Bamar wife returned to the Kachin State. "It was then," my friend concluded, "that he decided to enrol at the KTC where he studies now. It was the only thing left to do!"

The narrative moves along two tangents. On the one hand is the fear, already alluded to in previous chapters, of a government plot to marginalise the Kachin population through depriving them of access to higher education. The long-standing central policies barring certain ethnic nationalities from certain rungs of officialdom is here cast through a prism of popular speculation. The University of Medicine in Mandalay is indeed the only medical school accepting students from the Kachin State.[28] That its campus is surrounded by a ring of seductive internet

28 Up until the first decade of the new millennium, University of Medicine in Magway was reportedly the most ethnically diverse in the Union. However, under new reforms, students need to follow strict rules of admission and

shops was seen as part of a larger ploy. Yet falling into this trap was also a failure of willpower on the part of the student. His further ill-success as a migrant, and eventual homecoming with a non-Kachin bride, served to underline this point. The implicit message of the narrative that draws on these details is casting doubt on the institution of the Kachin Theological College. By recounting an initial failure in academic life, Brawng Awng is questioning whether seminary graduates should be trusted with educational affairs beyond the church.

Related to this line of argument was the notion that there is an overproduction of young clerics. Importantly, no one of my aquiantances would doubt their necessity in society. But the churches were often seen as withdrawing young talent from other spheres of public life, like schooling, that needed them more. The year before, a tacit conflict had developed between Brawng Awng and another founding member of NHTOI. The latter had originally graduated with a bachelor degree in political science, but had taken a leaning towards theology shortly after. Acting as the school manager, he would diligently lead daily devotion services for students and was reputed to be well suited for the job. Yet when he announced plans to join a foreign seminary for a degree in theology, his decision was met with disappointment by some of his peers. It was even suggested that his choice had influenced a student in the programme who, despite having attended the whole semester, refused to sit the final exam. The said young man had chosen to forego plans for a foreign degree in political science, returning, instead, to serve at his village church. Speaking of his colleague, Brawng Awng bemoaned, "He had spent so much on his last degree, used so much time and money and now he is wasting it all! He had even started a community school project is his township and invested a lot in it. Now it is all for nothing".

The present growth of Christian organisations in Kachin society was recognised by virtually all church ministers with whom I worked through my fieldwork (see Chapters 6 and 7 below). Some saw it as a positive sign from God. Others saw it as a more or less natural demand, fostered by war and suffering, emerging from within the society at large. As the following excerpts from late 2012 show, a number of

the catchment area for the Kachin State has been assigned to the University of Medicine in Mandalay.

Myitkyina educators saw the issue in a slightly different light.

> *It is now difficult for churches to find work for all* [KTC] *graduates. There are so many of them! Take the congregation in my home-town, for example. It is quite small but already has four reverends. And last year they divided the congregation in two to make room for more staff. They have to expand and expand. And most of the money is used for new church buildings and ceremonies. It does not benefit the community.*

A slightly more moderate opinion on the issue was offered by Tu Lum, a Catholic principal of another recently founded private programme in Myitkyina.

> *TL: It is not that there are too many theology students but that there is no clear separation between religion and education in our society. Take* [DH]*, for example, he could have good ideas but he himself is very religious and so his programme is the same. We cannot continue like this because there is no real dialogue in religion.*
>
> *MV: You mean between denominations?*
>
> *TL: Yes, that also. Everything is controlled by the Baptists and if you are not with them you have no chance! It took me so long to find funders for my school. Finally, I asked the embassies and the only one who replied was the US embassy in Yangon. And then they told me to join under a programme run by KBC! But there is also no clear separation of the church from the schools and this is the problem. There is no argument in religion. You cannot ask questions, so how can you get student debate? We need to have secular schools for that.*

As already mentioned, none of my interlocutors would denounce the church as a superfluous institution, nor see any negatives in its explicit aims. Rather, their worries were the allocation of scarce resources and unfounded authority in what was deemed the secular sphere. The critique was always framed in nationalist discourse, seeing the burden as hindrance to socio-economic development of the Kachin people in their rightful territories vis-à-vis the bigger, resource-rich and ultimately hostile neighbours.

Being a *Sara*, teacher, as a status marker was also heavily involved in this discourse.

Borrowed from Burmese, the more traditional meaning of *saya* has been for the church minister and Sunday school teacher, yet it can be employed for people of authority more generally, including regular school teachers. Brawng Awng's quote below captures the conflict of authority that can be attributed to these different professional roles grouped under a single nominator.

> *These days, the title* Sara [teacher] *has lost all meaning. Everyone you meet on the street is a* Sara. *You see a reverend* – Sara, *you see a junior pastor* – Sara, *you see a school- teacher* – Sara, *some random stranger – still* Sara*! This is just stupid! And this is a problem for our nation's education. The image of the* Sara *is very big and important. Whatever a* Sara *says is the law. You do not question if it is true or not. People never look further than that. So development stops there…*

Conclusion

Tensions between the civil society and ecclesiastical institutions in the Kachin society are among of the most controversial issues in the present stage of transition. Over the last half a century, being a Christian has been inseparably woven into Kachin national identity, making churches appear indispensable for ethno-national survival. Outside the spiritual domain, organisations such as the KBC and the Catholic Church have contributed enormously to local education, social welfare and, most recently, humanitarian relief projects. As devout Christians, most members of the society find it difficult to level meaningful and open critique against the clergy. While fun is made behind reverends' backs, it is the two types of communication central to pedagogic activity – personal dialogue and public speaking – wherein constructive critique is felt to be hampered by convention.

The aim of the ethnographic vignettes above has not been to paint a picture of irreconcilable conflict within Kachin society. Rather, my argument traced throughout this thesis, is one of complexity and dynamism in the sphere of formal education. Much like the leaders of Nawng E Hku Mission School in Laiza, and Samuel in his private practice, educators from NHTOI were essentially taking a stand against the status quo of the established social order that they saw as insufficient to meeting their particular visions of development. Their critique, expressed in both narratives and practice, provides an example of how the social

function of formal schooling extends beyond re-production. This is all the more important when recalling that, in many ways, all three examples given above had essentially emerged from within the religious organisations themselves and were acting in close cooperation with the KBC. The main form taken by their critique was in re-defining the fields for institutional action. Private educators described in this chapter were calling for a clearer separation of they saw as their professional domain from that of religion, and arguing for greater autonomy from the centralizing state. In so doing, they were trying to reinterpret some of the fundamental ethical norms of professionalism and intellectual authority in the Kachin society and Myanmar as a whole. At the same time, the educators were constantly forced to walk the thin line between acting independently and maintaining the trust and goodwill of the clergy on whom they remain dependent for social, and often financial, capital. I will return to the religious landscape of the Kachin State in the second half of the thesis. Below, I turn to consider several other fields upon which contests over development take place. These include the fragmented political territoriality of Myanmar and the internal hierarchies within the Kachin society itself.

The emergence of privately-owned Kachin schools in the late 1990s signalled an important fragmentation in the educational landscape of Myanmar. Free from centralised curricular constraints and oriented towards neighbouring countries, these schools started to experiment with social development in the emerging domain of civil society. Importantly, their educational programmes were geared towards a particular type of Kachin identity, premised on shared cultural and religious values but also having a secular dimension (thus setting them apart from existing theological seminaries that also exercised relative autonomy from the Burmese state). Despite in-fighting and political rivalry among Kachin political leadership bringing about their eventual downfall, a generation of graduates who had gained access to education in neighbouring countries have been able to start building up new institutions working towards similar goals.

The skills and contacts acquired while abroad have been instrumental in this process, suggesting significant impact of transnational networks of education on development in local societies. Whether in Thailand, India, Hong Kong, or further

afield, they were exposed – and readily admit as much – to systems of thought and practice unwonted in the own society. While always participating in an expatriate Kachin community, they remained relatively distant from most local concerns for the duration of their studies and employment. Concurrently, most of them managed to build up significant transnational networks that enabled access to resources that later benefitted their work. "It is trust," Tu Ja told me when dining at a local Japanese-inspired canteen, "trust that people have in me that has allowed me to get to this point. My foreign friends [meaning donors] know me personally. They have seen what I do. They know I can be relied upon." Such outside exposure does come with a price. Former Kachin expats frequently said that their sojourns fomented distrust back home. My female colleagues, in particular, lamented the fact that their friends and family often perceived their learning as quarrelsome feminist leanings acquired abroad. Even those students entering foreign Protestant seminaries arouse suspicion, due to the fact that the latter differ in dogma from the established Baptist order of things. Outside theological circles, however, prestige inherent in foreign degrees vastly overshadows most doubts. English skills alone are invaluable aid for finding employment. While the elder generation does not treat them as equals, young foreign graduates are generally held in good esteem and helped whenever possible, so far as they keep to certain established forms of respect (See Chapter 5). At the same time, experience from abroad provides them with professional skills and often a critical perpspectives towards problems in their own society.

Few scholars today would object that successive Burmese military juntas, as well as their present incarnation, have failed to develop formal education in the country, in comparison to many other Southeast Asian states. While Burmese schooling in general is wrought with problems, its shortcomings are most evident in areas with large populations of non-Bamar nationalities. Decades of linguistic discrimination have not only fuelled popular grievances among the Kachin but have fostered the establishment of separate institutional structures for providing mass education. Rather than offering a sustainable alternative, however, the latter remain subjugated to Nay Pyi Daw's policies. According to a widely shared perception among Kachin educators with whom I worked, the potential for workable solutions opened by the 1994 ceasefire fell short of its promise of bringing change. Against initial

expectations, it failed to generate 'real political dialogue', as several educators defined it, beyond ad-hoc military agreements reaping economic benefits for elites on both sides of the conflict. As Chapters 3 and 4 below will show, the outcome has been territorial fragmentation and alienation from Nay Pyi Daw's rule with adverse effects on educational institutions and opportunities throughout the Kachin State.

CHAPTER III Fragmented Territories and Sovereignties: Contextualizing Formal Schooling in the Contemporary Kachin State

We were sitting in front of the new campus of NHTOI on a sultry June afternoon, waiting for the classes to start. The front patio of the office offered some shade and view overlooking the yard. Through the open door, one could survey the sizable posters that had recently been printed to chart the activities of the school – English classes, civic training, election workshops, research. Half a dozen people had gathered around the table, most of them alumni serving as teachers or office staff. There was steaming green tea, someone had picked fresh figs. As on most days, we had been talking about the upcoming elections and the wrought process of getting ID cards for Myitkyina residents. Jacob, a teacher in his thirties, recounted his experience

> *"I went to the immigration office for renewal of my ID. I filled in all the details, my name, my date of birth, and everything. There was a box I had to tick at the end, saying I had not bribed any officials or given extra money with my application. So I submitted and waited for many days. Maybe a week. And then, finally, I went back to ask about my status. There was an old Burmese lady at the counter. She looked at my papers, reviewed my name and date of birth and statement and asked if they were correct. I said yes. She then closed the file and said it will take more time. I told her I had already waited too many days but she started to wave me away. Loudly, she said 'Look at all the people in the line! Can't you see how busy I am? All those people are waiting for their place here!' I did not want to leave. I went and stood in the corner, where she can see me, and waited for a long time. Finally, just before closing, she stood and waved me back to the desk. She opened the file and reviewed everything one more time. Slowly, she then wrote out my ID. After she had finished, she put the card aside and looked at me. Her voice was lower. She said I should pay some charity, literally 'office reserve' in Burmese. I*

gave her 5000 kyat and she started laughing. 'But madam, I am broke... That is all I have!' She shooed and waved me away"

At this, one of the female staffers said her grandmother had recently gotten her card after a single day of waiting. "Maybe it is easier now after the 'Boom!' bomb hit the immigration office? Not the big one by the Bamboo Field but a smaller one somewhere. Maybe after that they take it easy? Maybe they got the message? Some people say it was KIA who did it. The fighting was very hard at the time. But actually, it was maybe some civilian who did not like the immigration office. Maybe?"

We were briefly interrupted by a group of students offering us lunch and the topic veered unto a recent beauty pageant where a young Kachin woman had performed karaoke in KIA uniform, stirring up vicious debate. The news was very fresh but already social media was polarized on the issue. After a while, Jaacob brought the conversation back on the bomb. A male teacher said how after the first explosion, police in Myitkyina had started making random arrests on the street, picking up – he was unsure – twenty or thirty motorbikes. The owners were arrested on the spot, their vehicles confiscated. When those released inquired at the precinct about their motorbikes, they were told the bikes had been sent to Nay Pyi Daw. "In fact" the teacher claimed to several nods "they were simply given to local police officers!"

The competing visions of pedagogy and development in Kachin society that I analyze in this thesis are aligned with particular sovereignties and aspirations thereof. The short vignette above drawns out several themes that I will be discussing below. Underneath the banal reality of petty bureaucrat's attempted corruption lies a rather more complex historical dynamic of fractured rule and citizenship politics. Identity documents have long been a source of tension among the Kachin and other ethnic nationalities in Myanmar. Difficult to obtain, especially in rural regions, they restrict mobility and aspirations, deepening existing regional inequalities. More recently, these tensions have become topical in the context of electoral politics. It is symbolic and not altogether incidental that the exchange is taking place on the doorstep of an organization devoted to civic education. The fragment also fleshes out perceiptions of illegitimate governance in the Burmese administred Kachin State. The final discussion brings out experiences of arbitrary

violence and the spatial dynamics imposed by the central government. The faraway capital Nay Pyi Daw symbolises insurmountable distance both geographically and bureaucratically – a locus of authority for sovereign exception beyond appeal (see Introduction). I begin this chapter with an overview of the territorial fragmentation of contemporary Kachinland that lies beneath these competing and graduated sovereign domains. I then move to discuss how the state of Myanmar is experienced through its military-bureaucratic apparatus. I draw on observations and ethnographic examples from urban environments, infrastructure projects, and documentary practices with emphasis on areas formally controlled by the central government. I argue that rather than treating the administrative space of the Union of Myanmar as a unified whole, scholarly analyses and policy decision need to take into account its fragmented and contested everyday realities.

As noted in the Introduction, among the defining features of the Kachin State are its long history of armed conflicts and a chronically weak central government. With this in mind, one might expect to find in this geographically isolated and fragmented political space an absence of state power. Yet the opposite appears to be the case. Fluid politically liminal spaces have worked as catalysts, resulting in multiple state-like institutions vying over abundant but tightly controlled resources and popular legitimacy. Historical trajectories in the Kachin State confirm recent arguments by those political anthropologists who maintain that, rather than a predetermined and natural foundation of state power, territorial sovereignty is a historical contingency and a statist ideal. As argued by Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat (2005), state sovereignty is better understood as an "aspiration that seeks to create itself in the face of internally fragmented, unevenly distributed and unpredictable configurations of political authority that exercise more or less legitimate authority in a territory" (2005, 3). Ethnographic evidence from the contemporary Kachin State suggests that it would be conceptually problematic to treat sovereignty as a feature of one given state actor, in this instance the Union of Myanmar. One of the aims of the present work is to analyze forms of authority that have emerged to either counter or confirm the aspirations of particular state actors, including but not limited to those based in Yangon/Nay Pyi Daw.[29] In so doing, I

29 Yangon (Rangoon) was the country's capital from 1948 to 2006 when the junta moved its power base deep

maintain that to account for the realities of contemporary Kachin State, the term sovereignties should be used in plural.

Schooling and ideas of development more generally constitute a particularly interesting site for studying tensions around state power. On the level of state actors, formal mass education remains one of the foremost instruments for political elites to actualise their visions of society and propagate nationalist ideology (Bénéï 2008; Reed-Danahay 2004; Luykx 1999). In personal lives, academic credentials and skills have assumed an increasingly central role in enabling, or curtailing, social mobility. It is on this latter effect that the present chapter focuses. In particular, I look at documentary practices to suggest ways they can influence individual chances and aspirations in schooling.[30] Documents act as principal sites where the symbolic power of the state becomes manifest in people's lives, extending, in Pradeep Jeganathan's words, the "fluid margin of the state" quite literally onto one's person (2004, 75). It is here that the fragmentary nature of territorialisation in the Kachin State alluded to above becomes so important.

While dysfunctional bureaucratic and pedagogic institutions remain a feature across most of Myanmar, it is smaller ethnic nationalities like the Kachin who are arguably most affected. Part of this has to do with geography. As comparative literature on education has shown, physical access to schooling, and curtailment thereof, carries significant long-term effects on the groups affected, a situation often followed the ethnic divisions in society (Hamnett and Butler 2013; Aikman and Pridmore 2001). Marginalisation of this kind should not be assumed to be a simple correlate of the geographical distances. Often it is an active process driven by dominant political and economic interests. Much like the case of the Mindanao region in the Philippines analysed by Lorraine Pe Symaco, physical distances can be superimposed by "geographies of conflict" and metropolitan bias (2013, 317). Local readings of this multi-layered landscape influence choices on the ethno-nationalist political arena. They are equally crucial for the choices of educators in charge of

inland to the purpose built city of Nay Pyi Daw.

30 By documentary practices I am referring to any bureaucratic procedure where individuals or organisations are required to apply for, process, or submit documentary evidence of their identity or practices to state institutions.

non-state-schooling that seeks to remedy resulting inequalities. Ethnographic examples in the second half of this chapter serve to illustrate how Nay Pyi Daw's authority – one of the principal agents of this process – continues to be experienced (and resisted) in contemporary Kachin society. To begin, I recount two stories that first drew my attention to the aforementioned fragmentation in an educational context. Both strike me as introductions to wider issues discussed in this chapter, exemplified through two life histories that bear similarities to many thousands.[31]

Paths made and broken

I became acquainted with Nang Seng during one of my earliest visits to the government-controlled Myitkyina, Kachin State. At the time, I was doing a pilot study for my subsequent research and volunteered at different schools where my two colleagues and I were invited as lecturers. During those early days, my image of the region was probably not unlike that of most outsiders who have done their homework and maybe passed through Myitkyina for a short visit. I assumed I knew a thing or two about the draconian system of governance for which the state of Myanmar is justifiably reputed, and of the steadfast resistance put up by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). This polarised vision was easy, allowed one to take a moral stand, and seemed solid enough. It was also terribly simplistic. I got the first hint to that effect when talking to Nang Seng about her educational career one June afternoon in 2010.

She was born in Myitkyina in 1986, into what she would describe as a family of simple croppers. Her parents had no formal education. Despite their modest immediate household, her extended family held positions in the higher and lower echelons of KIA. Nang Seng entered a government primary school in Myitkyina at the age of 6. Her exams were passed with outstanding results. Continuing middle school in the same area, she stood out with essays (written exclusively in Burmese) and in speech competitions (also in Burmese) that took her to prestigious national competitions. During school years, Nang Seng was regularly socializing with her KIA cousins as well as Burmese friends who served as youth leaders for Nay Pyi

31 Those two short life histories were reconstructed from several interviews conducted during 2012. In the interests of the narrative, I have chosen to refrain from direct quotes in this instance.

Daw's ideological apparatus. She graduated eleventh standard at the top of her class but had to take a gap year to save money to attend the university. She started several tuition-based classes for younger students in her neighbourhood, a common path for local graduates straight out of school. She enrolled as an English major at Myitkyina University and continued her path of distinction.

Her professional career was characterised by abrupt turns that illustrate the diffuse boundaries of state and community in the outwardly polarised world of the Kachin State. During her student days, Nang Seng worked at the Myitkyina State Government Transport Department.[32] At the same time, she was volunteering as a Sunday school teacher at her neighbourhood Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) church. She also extended her expertise to the community level via popular English conversation clubs. Importantly, the conversation clubs were held in two different venues, one exclusively for Kachin youth, and one that was also open to Burmese speakers (inclusive of a mix of local nationalities). Graduating from the university, she was hired by a reputable for-profit private school specializing in business and foreign languages. Having used this opportunity to further enhance her skills in teaching and administration, she left soon after to open a socially-focused English centre for poorer families in Myitkyina's Dugathawn village. A year before we met, a group of her students had made it to the finals of another national olympiad in Nay Pyi Daw, at the time still the seat of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA). The unexpected victory of her students was still a point of pride for her during our conversations through 2010.

What struck me that afternoon was the fact that I was speaking to a successful young Kachin, strongly nationalistic in her views, commitments, and relations, yet brought up in, and periodically working for, Burmese state institutions. Through her own person, she was actively supplementing for the chronic deficiencies in state-schooling sector. The tuition-based classes she was giving offered income, yes, but their other function, no less crucial for the society at large, was raising the standard of education to a level unattainable through the central system. Her later endeavours assumed an increasingly social orientation. Equally important, she was

32 The name of the department has been changed to protect identities.

volunteering through the biggest local Christian organisation, the KBC, which has been another key actor in the field of supplementary education in the Kachin State. All the while, her educational credentials were afforded by Nay Pyi Daw, whose symbolic prestige she was choosing to recognise despite disowning the legitimacy of their authority over Kachinland.

It took me a couple of more visits to realise that her story was also an outstanding example of success despite all odds. For the majority of Kachin I came to know after that first visit, opportunities open to Nang Seng seldom presented themselves, and almost never in so blessed a succession. What follows is a second example, very much a contrast to the first. The story of Seng Aung, whom I only ever met through his brother's memories, is far more common in the contemporary Kachin Hills.

He was born two years after Nang Seng, in 1988. His parents were farmers who raised six children in a small village several hours from the town of Mogaung (see Map 1). By the time Seng Aung was school-aged, they were really struggling to support three sons and three daughters. Some of their land had been lost to a plantation as part of a semi-forced dispossession scheme headed by a local Burmese army major. This led to his parents having to leave home for increasingly longer periods, working in the paddy fields several days' trek from their home. The children were left to be looked after by elder siblings and a sick grandfather who needed more care than he could give. Seng Aung started in a government primary school, even though he and his siblings spoke no Burmese. His brother recalls this as a major obstacle and, somewhat later, a source of constant humiliation. Seng Aung was a restless student and struggled to make it through fourth standard. By that time, his mother had fallen gravely ill and lost the use of her legs. The children took turns to care for her while the father was still toiling in the paddies to feed the family and pay for children's schooling. Not long after their eldest brother, a big hope for the family, graduated, he got into a fatal motorcycle accident with a military truck. From that point onwards, Seng Aung and his only remaining brother needed to work several months a year in a jungle logging operation that belonged to a Chinese entrepreneur in Mogaung. They were regularly incapacitated by malaria and their education suffered even more. His younger brother, the narrator, admitted that Seng Aung lost all interest while he would be doing both their homework.

When Seng Aung was in the eighth standard, a brawl near their family fields left their father crippled. It had involved Burmese soldiers and no compensation was given. It was at this point that Seng Aung dropped out of school and started working full-time. The following year, Seng Aung was persuaded by two of his older friends to try his luck in Hpakant jade mines. Against his father's wishes, the three made their way to Mogaung and hitched a ride from there. To everyone's surprise, barely two months had passed when some money was sent back to the village through a relative. The next time Seng Aung was heard of, though, he had injured himself at the digging site and the wound had caused a fatal fever.

As for his brother, he left his ailing father in care of his sisters and moved to Mai Ja Yang to enlist in the KIA. However, he ended up staying with two elderly aunts and one of them, a former teacher from Mandalay who had fled the '88 crackdown, persuaded him to enrol at a KIO school instead. By recommendation from an uncle in the KIA, he was then able to enter the local Intensive English Programme (IEP) where we met.

Borderworld geographies

Brenda Chalfin has noted that one may read the borderworlds as records "of state's unfinished projects, some complementary, some divergent, none foolproof in scope or effectiveness" (2010, 87). When it comes to the formal boundaries of contemporary Myanmar, divergence tends to dominate. In what follows, I aim to read some of those 'records' as they were documented in my diaries and interview transcripts collected during repeated visits between 2010 and 2013. My aim is not to provide a normative assessment of state projects, failed or otherwise, but to sketch certain recurrent complexities that are relevant to ethnic politics and educational landscape of this region.

The territorial entity known today as the Kachin State comprises the northernmost administrative division of the Union of Myanmar. It covers an area of 89,041 kilometres, roughly twice the size of Denmark, of largely rugged hill tracts and valleys running along a north-to-south axis. According to the latest provisional

census data (Ministry of Immigration and Population 2014),[33] the total population of the Kachin State was estimated at 1,689,654.[34] Despite the relatively big territorial expanse, the population density is the second lowest in the whole Union, with 19 people per square kilometre, as opposed to the national average of 76 (Ministry of Immigration and Population 2014). The majority of the populace is concentrated in the southern plains and valleys that provide a richer base for agriculture, still the economic mainstay for most individual households. Despite its name, the Kachin State is populated by a diverse mix of ethnic nationalities. The Kachin – itself a politically loaded category denoting a contested set of smaller subgroups[35] – make up about half of the total population, together with Bamar, Chinese, Indian, Gurkha and others.[36] Moreover, as I show in Chapter 6, this variegation is further accentuated in the sphere of organised religion. In itself, this diversity is hardly unique to the region. Many Southeast Asian countries exhibit comparable ethnic complexities, characterised by strained and often violent relations between state actors and various ethnic ('minority') nationalities (Snitwongse and Thompson 2005; Brown 2003). However, as several authors have shown (Sadan 2013; South 2008;

33 Full census results, including detailed data on ethnicity, remained unpublished during the writing of this thesis.

34 This figure includes an official estimate of 46,600 unaccounted people. However, given the latest estimates of over 120,000 people displaced by the ongoing conflict and the difficulties of access to significant parts of the state held by KIO and other armed groups, the former figure could thus be understated. It should also be pointed out that the latest census figure is markedly higher than 1,433,000 that the government's daily The New Light of Myanmar quoted in 2005 (Thiha 2005).

35 These most commonly include Jinghpaw, Lachik, Lawngwa, Lisu, Rawang and Zaiwa. While elites among smaller subgroups, most notably the Lisu and Rawang, have sometimes contested their subordinate status in this division, the inclusion of these six subgroups under the common denominator Kachin continues to be endorsed by dominant local organisations like the KIO and KBC. Significantly, the 2014 Census listed a total of 12 Kachin subgroups, leading to calls by Kachin elites to publicly decry prescribed categories by simply noting the"Kachin 101 code", a higher level sub-heading in the census form not relevant for that particular question (Kachin News Group 2014).

36 Ethnic composition of this area remains subject to much controversy among locals and international observers alike (BCN 2014; ICG 2014). Having said that, it is probably safe to assume that the 2014 census – the first since 1983 – promises more validity than previous attempts in recent history. The last two censuses, conducted by Gen. Ne Win's military regime in 1973 and 1983, had limited credibility due to lack of expertise, incomplete access, poor transparency, and other inconsistencies (for an overview of results and limited critique see Khin Maung, 1986; Maung, 1980). For discussion on censuses prior to the 20th century and their role in the construction of modern Burma see Thant Myint-U (2004).

Callahan 2005; Dean 2002; Smith 1991), historical trajectories characteristic of Myanmar and the Kachin State have led to ethno-linguistic and religious differences being institutionalised in projects of local statecraft and national ideologies. This has been done in ways that have given rise to competing sovereignties. The relative autonomy of the latter, largely supported by the force of arms, makes Myanmar stand out from most of its mainland Southeast Asian neighbours.[37] I shall be looking at one of the strongest of such sovereignties, the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), in the next chapter. In what follows, I mostly talk about areas of the Kachin State under Nay Pyi Daw's formal control.

As noted in the Introduction, the areas that make up the contemporary Kachin State were largely autonomous for most of their recorded history, comprising of smaller semi-nomadic chiefdoms related through kinship and linguistic affinities. Politically and geographically, they remained distant from both pre-colonial and British power centres. The second half of the twentieth century saw significant expansion of Burmese control of these areas. Yet in more ways than one, the Kachin State remains strenuously connected to the rest of Myanmar even today. I begin by mapping how this distance is manifested in everyday life. One of the grievances most commonly articulated by my Kachin colleagues was the chronic lack of serviceable transport infrastructure and severely lagging telecommunications, both of which remain significant in the settings of higher education.[38]

The Kachin State capital of Myitkyina is connected to the closest regional centre Mandalay via a single rail link in serious disrepair. An average journey takes anywhere between 20 to 30 hours. Both departures and stops along the way are unpredictable and delays lasting 6 hours or more are not uncommon. The journey itself is not without dangers. The dilapidated state of the railway has led to numerous accidents, and frequent police checks inflict an air of quiet oppression. River transport and patchy highways are highly dependent on seasonal weather

37 Across its Western borders in India, similar legacies remain, for example, in Nagaland (Chakraborty 2012).

38 I recognise the fact that most of my informants were urbanite Kachin, many of whom had spent time in neighbouring India, Thailand, and China. Their perceptions, and the ways they came to be articulated, were doubtlessly affected by the fact. Further work is required to make claims as to how issues described below are experienced and reflected upon by a far bigger population of Kachin living in rural areas.

fluctuations and are often not navigable due to rains. A costly alternative catering to the local elites is domestic flights from Myitkyina, Bhamo, and Putao airports, but these remain outside the grasp of the great majority of the local population. These limitations are further aggravated by sporadic armed clashes and general militarisation that has long imposed arbitrary, often violent, restrictions on trade and travel.

Transport within the State can be equally challenging. Major towns are linked via semi-paved roads that are often little more than crumbling patches of asphalt and dirt. Difficult during the dry season, monsoons turn all but the biggest of roads into pools of mud. It is perhaps illustrative of this state of affairs that even the heartland of the jade industry in the Kachin State, Hpakant, remains unconnected via paved roads.[39] It exemplifies the general effects of overlapping and contested sovereignties on the one hand, and Nay Pyi Daw's disregard for regional integration on the other. As a crucial economic resource, the mines have changed hands between the *tatmadaw* and various armed groups like the KIA, Pa-O National Army (PNA), and United Wa State Army (UWSA) throughout recent decades. Neither of these actors, nor their cross-border Chinese clients contracting the mines, appears to have had sufficient incentives to invest in permanent infrastructure beyond that serving their most immediate business interests. Overall, this has contributed to increasingly vocal public opinion that the ceasefire years (1994-2011) brought no societal benefits and only served to entrench military elites in power. This, in turn, has further complicated political dialogue and alienated the Kachin from authorities in Nay Pyi Daw.[40]

It must be noted that, in the last few years, some economically strategic areas in the Kachin State have seen limited infrastructure development driven by Chinese extractive industries (O'Connor 2011; KDNG 2008; KDNG 2007a; KDNG 2007b). For example, during the three years since my first visit to Myitkyina in 2010, a superior paved highway has been installed between the regional capital and Mali-N'Mai Hka

39 I am grateful to Laur Kiik for pointing this out to me.

40 As mentioned in the second chapter, the critique advanced by some younger educators is more nuanced, touching not only on Nay Pyi Daw's shortcomings but also scrutinizing choices made by political and religious elites in the Kachin society.

confluence to service Chinese damming projects in the north (see Map 1).[41] However, these 'developments' have also included forced displacement of villages and irreversible damage to the natural environment (Jat 2013; KDNG 2009). Despite some limited change in Chinese attitudes that see them 'reaching out' to local populations through monetary support in projects like the Myitsone Dam, their benefits are aimed at servicing the industries themselves (see Map 1).[42] This is a fact hardly lost to local populations who watched high-voltage power lines fly over darkened villages, carrying electricity – perceived as being produced at significant cost to local ecosystems – across the border to China. It is within the context of this "resource grab", as Kiik (in press) has noted in his recent overview of Chinese investment policies in the Kachin State, that acutely felt marginalisation fuels hyper-politicised discourses of resistance to encroaching powers of state and capital.

A related point informing daily conversations, particularly among students and educators, is the state of internet connections in Myitkyina and the surrounding areas.[43] It is another example of how the lack of infrastructure deepens existing sentiments of territorial exclusion. The last decade has witnessed significant growth of interest in the World Wide Web, particularly its mobile and social media applications, across Myanmar's urban centres (PBC 2014). 2012-2013 saw Nay Pyi Daw liberalise its telecommunications market, allowing foreign companies to start joint ventures with the central government, a bid quickly followed by Telenor and Ooredoo, two multinational service providers. The increasing significance of internet for communication, awareness, and political action in Myanmar has been emphasised by several scholars (Chowdhury 2008; Krebs 2001; Troester 2001), while human rights organisations have cautioned against irresponsible expansion of the lucrative telecommunications sector (HRW 2013).

41 This and similar projects have been constructed by the China Power Investment Corporation (CPI) for their own limited use, largely disregarding the needs of local communities or the regional development plans of Myanmar as a whole.

42 Kiik has recently argued that these changes are equally driven by local popular resistance in the Kachin State and wider Myanmar that in turn has prompted policy changes dominant state and private sector actors (Kiik, in press).

43 My fieldwork locations were mainly constrained to urban Myitkyina and its immediate surroundings, as well as the KIO enclaves of Mai Ja Yang and Laiza. It is very likely that this particular issue has little or no relevance in most of rural Kachin State. However, it is certainly topical, and increasingly so, for the local elites.

Less studied is its relevance to educational opportunities. In national contexts where locally funded scholarships are virtually non-existent, anyone lacking wealthy familial relations – which is to say the great majority – is dependent on support provided from outside sources. Skills of searching for and communicating with foreign universities and funders, particularly secular ones, constitute an essential resource.[44] Use and development of these skills requires practice. It is not hard to see how this would be a problem in contexts where downloading the smallest attachments can take several nights of constant effort. There were times during my fieldwork when the respective speeds of Myitkyina's several internet shops became something of a proverbial weather topic. Together with students and teachers, we would often spend evenings huddled over screens trying to load application forms or supporting documents that kept stubbornly failing. Overcoming such seemingly trivial material obstacles does, in fact, require enormous dedication on the part of young graduates looking for opportunities in the labyrinthine and dreamlike world of foreign universities. In a series of brief questionnaires I handed out during my visit to Mai Ja Yang's Teachers Training College in 2011, 74% of the respondents (total of 51) answered that they had considered education abroad. Out of this, 71% claimed the main obstacle was their lack of information on scholarships and means of accessing it. Importantly for the preceding discussion, while reliability and speeds remain an issue across the country, Myitkyina is commonly felt to be far more haphazardly connected. In popular discourse, this has given rise to fears and accusations of deliberate interference by the central government. The issue is conflated with topics like environmental degradation, crippled transportation infrastructure, and educational underachievement among smaller ethnic nationalities. The point here is not to question the truth-value of such statements but to illustrate a wider climate of distrust and feelings of strategic marginalisation suffered by the Kachin populace.

For most practical purposes, then, infrastructure lags behind even the modest standards of the rest of Myanmar, literally underlying marginalisation of a more symbolic sort. Sadan (2013) has convincingly shown that the latter dates back to the

44 As I argue later on, this constitutes one of the many areas where younger private educators can, in fact, put into practice new forms of cultural capital so central to the transforming field of education.

British conquest of Assam in the 19th century, when Kachin elites were actively excluded from economic participation and political representation in the new colonial order. Ethnocentric depictions of Kachin chiefs as given to passions and incapable of constructive political engagement was further aggravated during the Burmese struggle for independence, as smaller ethnic nationalities were perceived as having had sided with the British against Burmese nationalists. In the political turmoil of the post-independence period analysed by both Mandy Sadan (2013) and Mary Callahan (2005), this image gained even more salience in army circles that saw in ethnic nationalities a veritable threat to the territorial integrity of the newly founded Union.[45]

Distrust towards and marginalisation of minority populations has been increasingly formalised in the policies of successive Burmese regimes since 1947 (Callahan 2003). One of the most criticised among these in local context has been the exclusion of minority languages from government curricula that has been implemented since the late 1960s. However, grievances also include the use of Burmese as the official language in all levels of officialdom (an important example being the 2008 referendum that was disseminated to the public only in Burmese), discrimination in the sphere of religion against non-Buddhist believers (ratified in the Constitution), ethnically selective employment and promotion in the military and state institutions, and perceptions of state-led migration into the Kachin State of majority Bamars.

A prominent expression of this marginalisation is what could be called a sustained state of exception. The latter term was brought into political philosophy by Carl Schmitt, expressing his definition of the sovereign as the one "who decides on the exception" ([1922] 2006, 5). It has since been taken up by contemporary theorists, such as in the work of Giorgio Agamben. The latter argues that, despite being relegated beyond the accepted confines of juridical theory, the state of exception constitutes the "original means" by which law refers to and encompasses life (2005,

45 Having said so, Callahan also notes that, to an extent, the common narrative of the breakup of the Union could equally have been an excuse, in 1962, for the military to take power. According to this view, inter-army power struggles were an equally salient reason for the coup, especially since the actual demands of the Federal Seminar of several ethnic nationalities had been relatively modest.

1). Pursuing full theoretical implications of Agamben's argument remains outside the scope of the present discussion. Rather, I would like to enlist a more pragmatist strain of thought that, pace Allessandro Fontana, finds the exception in the "ambiguous, uncertain, borderline fringe, at the intersection of the legal and the political" (cited in ibid., 1). It holds relevance for the Kachin context, in which local interpretations of the conflict are characterised by constant groping of the ambiguous boundaries between political demands and more formalised fields of international law and business.

At its most visible, this sustained state of exception pervades in and around the majority of important economic arteries of the Kachin State that have long formed flashpoints in armed conflicts. Yet their everyday effects reach far beyond these spaces. Even in population centres like Myitkyina that remain firmly under Nay Pyi Daw's control, both daily life and development plans can be subject to arbitrary interventions by competing state and quasi-state agents acting above all accountability. Individuals can be detained on little or no grounds; public spaces are saturated by fear of government informers; travel and trade can be restricted or subjected to arbitrary checks. Scarce and unreliable services provided by the state remain a contradictory terrain. Symbolic of this is the darkness suffered due to the haphazard supply of electricity to the state capital. Illustrative of the complexities of state territorialisation in the area is the fact that power to the city is supplied, not centrally, but by a private company Buga Co. Ltd. ('homeland' in Jinghpaw) with direct links to the KIO.

Joint plans between Yangon and Laiza to construct a hydropower plant in Waingmaw township near Myitkyina were set in motion as early as 1997. Following the agreements of 1994, the move was one of several promising steps during the early years of the ceasefire. Jinxin Co., the largest Chinese timber company active in the Kachin State at the time, was contracted to build the plant on Mali Hka river in return for sizeable logging concessions. The limited capacity hydropower station was finished in 2006 and became operational the following year. Though inadequate to fully meet the growing energy demands, it remains the only viable source for

lighting the streets of Myitkyina and Waingmaw for a few hours each night.[46] Even so, the current is anything but stable and constant outages, announced by darkness and the sputter of generators that some wealthier households and businesses can afford, remain a nightly affair. In popular parlance, this symbolises the impotence of central government. "In [the KIO's] Laiza, we have stable power all the time. Everyone is so surprised when electricity fails. But in Myitkyina, the government cannot even fix it for a single night! They [meaning Nay Pyi Daw] cannot manage the Kachin State", lamented one of my long time colleagues from Nawng E Hku in 2012.

During my work in Myitkyina in 2011 and 2012, power lines connecting the town were repeatedly destroyed in the fighting, giving rise to heated debates around issues of territory and governmental responsibility. Publicly, the KIA accused the *tatmadaw* of sabotaging the lines in concerted efforts to increase the vulnerability of the area. This was retorted by claims that the KIO itself had manipulated the supply to disrupt government services. Ironically, not only government offices but the *tatmadaw* bases relied on Buga power. Whatever the truth of these claims, the ones suffering the biggest hit were local businesses and homes unequipped with expensive backup generators. Even local hospitals and clinics were unable to afford running the latter around the clock, as several doctors and nurses told me. The following version of the events surrounding one long-term blackout was related to me in 2012 by a Kachin man working for an internet café in downtown Myitkyina.

> *We heard that they accidentally shot down the power mast. There has been a lot of fighting so nobody is sure who did it. Maybe it was Kachin. Maybe it was Burmese. Who knows! Now the lines are down on the ground and on one side the KIA soldiers are taking cover, on other the Burmese soldiers are taking cover. They have made talks because everybody needs the power. They know that Myitkyina is dark. But first, they cannot trust each other. If one comes out they will be shot. And the same for the other. Then they talk again and they agree not to shoot. But the problem is,*

46 In addition to Buga Co.'s Mali Hka power plant, the area is serviced by the two smaller plants of Nam Hkam Hka and Galai Jaung, built in the 1990s and operated by the central government. Larger projects in Chipwi (built by the Chinese Power Investment and Asia World Company) and Namti have been declared as complete but their fate remains uncertain.

all area around the lines is full of land mines. And the people who put the mines are already dead and killed in battle. So they cannot know where the mines are and now they just wait!

This short anecdote, reminiscent of the short stories on the India-Pakistani Partition by Saadat Hasan Manto (1988), is illustrative of the wider effects the recent conflict has had on local infrastructure. The mistrust shared by soldiers on opposing sides has resonances on a far bigger political scale. A less caricaturist example would be the breakdown of tacit agreements between educational authorities in Laiza and Nay Pyi Daw that had helped integrate KIO schooling to the rest of Myanmar from 1994 to 2011. During one of my last visits in 2013, a senior official working for the State Minister's office described extensive plans that had been made for the modernisation of transport infrastructure to link Myitkyina and its surrounding areas to central Myanmar. "They have been ready for some time now but we cannot start work until political solutions are reached. Long term projects need stability and right now we have none". All of the above can be seen as symptomatic of the state of exception that has prevailed in the region over the past decades, despite temporary cessations of open hostilities. It remains a defining characteristic of state sovereignties vying for power and the uncertainty faced by individuals and institutions in daily life.

Apart from cross-border trade concessions to Chinese enterprises, the contemporary Kachin State remains sidelined from the majority of modernizing processes to which most of the country appears to be gradually opening.[47] In this connection it is significant to note that most areas of the Kachin State have long remained inaccessible to official aid and development projects coming from outside Chinese and ASEAN contexts.[48] Speaking of effects that globalisation has brought to bear on much of the developing world, Saskia Sassen notes how sovereignty and territory,

47 There remain significant parts of Myanmar, including Kokang, Wa State, and large areas inhabited by the ethnic Rohingyia, who are equally excluded from these developments.

48 It should be noted that quasi-formal arrangements have existed beneath the gaze of the central state at least since early 1990s. These include aid from international religious organisations, foreign embassies, and various INGOs whose largely personal networks have linked to Kachin borderworlds. KIO enclaves have also benefited from limited support of donors in China and India (see Chapter 4 below).

while still central to modern states, have been "reconstituted and partly displaced" into supra-national arenas governed by global institutions of disproportionate power and resources (1996, 29; see also Strange 1997). Trade regulations, conflict arbitration, and legal regimes can and have been forced on national governments, thereby transposing their sovereignty. Seen through the lens of changing labour and citizenship rights in Southeast Asia's fast-growing economies, Aihwa Ong's work (2000) has drawn attention to the more negative effects of these processes. However, change brought by greater awareness and accountability, as well as much needed aid and investment, can also be positive. Foreign interventions were certainly perceived as desirable by most of my informants.

By all appearances, Myanmar shares most characteristics of 'weak' states destined for increasing intervention from outside its territorial borders. Moreover, as noted by the authors of a recent review on Myanmar's political and economic transition in the new millennium, its government appears both open to, and popular with, development and investment partners from the global North (Rieffel and Fox 2013). Nay Pyi Daw's newfound willingness to engage in dialogue and limited reforms makes it an attractive destination for bi-and multi-lateral aid. Rich in both untapped market potential and natural resources, it has long attracted prospectors from its immediate neighbours (Bissinger 2012; Haacke 2006). Recent easing of Western sanctions and debt waivers have expanded its investment and trade potential even more. These developments have created new spaces for engagement and intervention by organisations such as the United Nations, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, and International Red Cross. However, while this has led analysts like Rieffel and Fox (2013) to give their positive assessment to recent reforms, immense areas like the Kachin State continue to be excluded from most benefits. Emblematic of this tacit reclusion to foreign intervention in 'sensitive' regions were UNHRC humanitarian convoys that, through 2012 and 2013, stood stalled for months both inside Myanmar and at the Chinese border, unable to access severely overpopulated refugee camps.

(Il)legible identities and schooling

My discussion so far has touched on general outlines of the persistent political and

economic marginalisation of the Kachin State vis-à-vis the rest of Myanmar. It has its basis in the lack of physical infrastructure, as well as fragmented territorialities and on-going conflicts between dominant political actors. The following ethnographic examples serve to further illustrate this fragmentation. I first focus on the movement of people in the context of formal education, in order to highlight some of the difficulties faced by young intellectuals whose lives and careers I will be returning to throughout this thesis. Karin Dean (2007b) has drawn attention to the tensions between arrangements of space conceived by state power and the actual lived realities of border-dwellers in their everyday lives. The contemporary Kachin State offers numerous examples of disparities between these conceptions and realities, showing that people can and do find ingenious ways to work around the state, by employing the proverbial "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1987). However, this should not be taken to suggest that the coercive power of state institutions remains insignificant. The latter can and do exercise violence, symbolic or physical, on local populations. In the Kachin State, this violence is further aggravated by the existence of competing claims to sovereignty and long histories of armed conflict. An analysis of educational landscape of modern Myanmar must account for these complexities. They remain essential for understanding not only the hurdles and opportunities that smaller ethnic nationalities like the Kachin face in schooling, but also the sentiments and grievances driving resistance to state institutions.

The following excerpt from the educational career of one of the students at the NHTOI education centre in Myitkyina exemplifies the difficulties that the fragmented sovereignties impose on students from KIO enclaves. Zau Hkyen, the young man who related this story in May 2012, had travelled to Myitkyina for a semester of English training in preparation for his TOEFL test. Like most Kachin graduates with whom I worked at NTHOI, he was hoping to apply for a university abroad or at least better his chances for employment at home. He was originally from the Mai Ja Yang enclave in a KIO-controlled area and had passed his prior education there.

At first I did not plan to enrol this year at all but then I received a message from

NHTOI that I should apply. Because of the conflict I struggled to get an ID card.[49] *I travelled to Loije to apply for the card. But when they found out I am from Mai Ja Yang, they asked for so much money! So finally, I did not get the card and had to take the risk. I was so scared when I travelled to Myitkyina. They know I am Kachin and I have no documents. All the way, in every checkpoint, I pray to Jesus that the soldiers don't look at me. When I finally saw Myitkyina I knew that I am blessed!*

This sparse narrative belies the gravity of threats faced by Kachin youth attempting undocumented travel inside Myanmar, including those pursuing education. Moving into Myitkyina from most KIO enclaves involves navigating unpredictable lines of armed conflict. Even arrests in areas of relative peace could bring charges of allegiance to the KIO/KIA. Young Kachin men lacking documents are particularly vulnerable to suspicions of insurgency. Towards the end of my fieldwork in 2013, rumours started spreading among the Kachin communities in Myitkyina of youth being rounded up by the military police after dark, and taken into custody. Many of my younger friends and colleagues with links to the KIO were needing to stay at home in the evenings on the orders of their relatives. If the youth did stay out after dark, they would always ride home in a group, making sure no one was separated. This kind of response follows from a context where arbitrary state violence had become an increasingly common occurrence. It illustrates the climate of fear and uncertainty that young people navigate daily, even in areas of relative peace.

When I was having the above conversation with Zau Hkyen, the semester was already drawing to a close. Despite his unassuming nature, he had been among the most outstanding students in class and was often praised by his teachers. Waiting for his TOEFL exam results, his immediate plans were to return to his parents' home in Mai Ja Yang to help out with the household economy. Any long-term plans outside KIO enclaves, however, would require him to secure proper documentation.

It has been easier here in Myitkyina because we stay in the boarding house most of

49 Zau Hkyen refers here to National Registration Card (also known as Citizen Scrutiny Card) issued under the 1982 Union Citizenship Law. It is printed in three different colours to denote either full, associate, or naturalised citizenship. The card records a photo, thumbprint, name of the holder, holder's father, date of birth, ethnicity, significant physical features, profession and address.

the time. It is safe here. But I have to leave soon and this will be the real difficulty. I will probably ride to Manmaw [Bhamo] *from here. I have relatives there and I can stay with them. If I take the boat it will be safer as there are no checkpoints on the river. If I am lucky, I can apply for an ID card in Manmaw.*

The lack of identity documentation is still very common for people living in the vast mountainous hinterlands, particularly those controlled by the KIO. Passports valid for travel abroad are limited to select elites. But even the more common form of identification, a national ID card, can be unattainable due to lack of money, connections, or the threat of being identified with the political opposition. Very often, the fear of abstruse and corrupt bureaucracy is in itself enough to limit people's aspirations. That same semester, another student told me how her two brothers decided to join the KIA after the eldest had repeatedly failed to procure documents for moving to Mandalay. Throughout my fieldwork, I witnessed several students forego educational opportunities solely for lacking required basic documentation that they were unable to secure in time, or at all. These observations should, moreover, be taken in the context that I mainly interacted with the younger Kachin elites in activist or educational backgrounds. These groups tend to have better skills in interacting with bureaucracies and attaining relevant information than the wide majority of Kachin population from the rural hinterlands. Small but well-established peer networks, such as NHTOI that I have already mentioned elsewhere, help newcomers maximise their opportunities in ways that is entirely unrealistic for the great majority of Kachin youth today.

Though weak institutional structures that have made this a chronic problem should be criticised, the fact that one is required valid papers does not in itself make Myanmar stand out. Scholars have looked at issues of movement and classification that arise from identity and documentary practices in different contexts (see, for example, Jeganathan 2004; Ferme 2004). What I wish to point out here are the subtler effects dysfunctional Myanmar bureaucracy exerts on the Kachin society and the ways these can inform life choices. For all its precariousness, the case of Zau Hkyen given above is among the more positive examples where individual courage to take risks has led to some mobility. More often than not, uncertainty produced by the sustained state of exception, such as in limits on personal movement and

institutional exchange, is curbing both aspirations and actual possibilities in education and work.

Uneasiness caused by documentary restrictions within Myanmar can have repercussions even for those who do manage to overcome the obstacles and leave the country. In late 2010, I spoke about this with one of the young activists then based in the Mai Ja Yang enclave. Hkawn Ja had managed to attend several training courses across the border in Thailand and was now working for a locally-managed Kachin NGO raising awareness around environmental issues and gender equality. At the time, having enough money and connections meant that counterfeit national ID cards could, in theory, be attained from corrupt officials.[50] International passports were a scarcer commodity and Hkawn Ja suggested that KIO areas were easier for procuring one. "As for me, I would better be with no documents at all than carry a fake one. Even with a real passport, I was constantly afraid in Thailand because the police could still check and tell me it was fake!" However, attempting to enter a foreign university with a counterfeit passport is not unheard of among the Kachin graduates.

Several educators I knew had had to falsify their identification documents at some point during their studies. In Myitkyina, I worked with a middle-aged educator who had left Myanmar with a fake passport in the early 2000s. Like many Kachin migrants, he had initially travelled to Thailand where he enrolled at Chiang Mai University. He managed to continue his studies for two years, largely thanks to existing Kachin networks in Chiang Mai and individual sponsorship. From Chiang Mai, he was able to move to Hong Kong where he entered another Bachelor programme at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Graduating with honours, he then used his established networks to return, by way of Thailand, to Myanmar, and start his own school. After several years, his friends and benefactors managed to convince him to apply for further study. One serious obstacle was using his (entirely authentic) diploma from Hong Kong that had been awarded to a fictional person. Another leading educator in Laiza had bribed for a fake ID from the Shan State when the war started. At the time, those issued near Laiza were simply considered

50 Myanmar introduced electronic databases to its population register in 2005 but no implications for documentary practices resulting from this change were reported to me in the Kachin State at the time of research.

too risky. Some time later, he used the Shan State ID to apply for an international passport to use for travel. He noted that, if he wanted to do a degree abroad in the future, he would have to procure yet another separate passport with his real name to match his original diplomas.

Counting and classification in the borderlands

In addition to bare bureaucratic challenges, attaining legal documentation issued by the central government can be seen as tacit recognition of an illegitimate regime. As Jeganathan notes, the function of identity documents transcends their immediate practicality into the realm of subjectification (Jeganathan 2004, 75). Many of my interlocutors lamented the fact that dealings with government agents signified compliance with an encroaching and dysfunctional state apparatus.

Institutions such as the census were viewed with particular mistrust. Prior to the heavily criticised Constitutional Referendum of 2008, the central government conducted a partial population count with assistance from the United Nations Populations Fund (UNPF). At the time, the KIO allowed census officials to access some areas under its control, including the crucial Mai Ja Yang enclave. However, what was seen as subsequent politicisation of census results by Nay Pyi Daw was widely condemned by Kachin organisations. Difficulties of access meant that the numbers coming from the Kachin State were strongly under-counted even before alleged falsifications.

Opinions were further substantiated by the unfair procedure of the Constitutional Referendum itself that is commonly seen to have sidelined ethnic nationalities and cemented the grip on power of Bamar elites from the former junta. The procedure was widely perceived to have been orchestrated by the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) without much pretence to impartiality or transparency.[51] In terms of content, the National Convention neglected joint calls by ethnic ceasefire groups to include additional constitutional provisions for ethnic affairs, protection of minority languages and traditions, and regional autonomy. Fuelling discontent were several provisions that were seen as directly harming the

51 Widespread violations were documented by a local watchdog organisation, the Institute of Political Analysis and Documentation (IPAD 2009).

status quo in States. For example, §9 (c) and §54 of the Constitution lay out the procedure for changing names and territorial boundaries of existing States/Regions. This raised widespread concerns about historical designations, such as the Kachin State, being dropped to further undermine political aspirations for regional autonomy and independence.[52] It is thus that the popular imaginaries perceived institutions such as the census and referendum as belonging to a single device of political marginalisation. They are seen to work alongside more banal forms of political exclusion like the systematic withholding of elections in Kachin areas (see Map 4).

Two years after the 2008 referendum, ahead of the equally controversial parliamentary elections of 2010, the authorities in Myitkyina ordered another population count. A number of households I spoke to about this during successive visits through 2012 remembered the procedure somewhat differently. Seng Ja, a middle aged teacher in the Dugahtawn quarter, said her husband had to deliver copies of their Household Registration List to the local immigration officer. The same was reported for the Manhkring ward. Conversely, a business owner in Shatapru quarter recalled that officers had actually come to her house to take the count ahead of elections.

Common to these perceptions of governance, however, was the sense of arbitrary urgency and uncertainty prevailing over the procedure. "We were told we only had two days to deliver the list", Seng Ja told me. "And why should they ask our names when they already have them? Our Kachin leaders could not even participate in the elections and then they want to take our names. My husband went to the officer but many people did not. We are tired of this Burmese way to democracy!" The last phrase is a common expression that I return to again throughout this work. It is used as shorthand to voice grievances in the present by linking it with a collective history of perceived injustice in the past. By punning on the political slogan of Ne Win's Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), "Burmese way to socialism", it crystallises the popular denial of any substantial change in the way successive regimes have governed the country since 1962.

52 Territorial boundaries thus naturalised appear to be one area where colonial and later Burmese bureaucratic

However, the above fragment also alludes to another quality of Myanmar state as perceived in the daily life. In tracing the margins of state power, Veena Das and Deborah Poole point to how this power is "both experienced and undone through the *illegibility* of its own practices, documents, and words" (2004, 10, original emphasis). Save for its coercive and panoptic functions, it remains a feature of Nay Pyi Daw's regional governance to be opaque and distant from the society at large. While it has allowed it to disregard popular demands and maintain a climate of rule through fear, it has also fragmented territorial imaginaries and curbed its own administrative capacities.

Conclusion

Placing the processes described above into a wider national perspective, it might be useful to recall Aihwa Ong's notion of "graduated sovereignty", referring to "differential treatment of populations according to ethno-racial differences, and the dictates of development programmes" (2000, 65). In the case of the Kachin State, the development programmes tend to be limited to Chinese extractive industries, on the one hand, and Nay Pyi Daw's authoritarian policies aimed at suppressing all claims to regional self-governance on the other. From the perspective of local Kachin activists, the central government appears more interested in perpetuating an unstable political environment to maintain a state of exception, ergo unchecked powers. In the past, this tactic has allowed central authorities to continue selling concessions to strictly profit-oriented foreign partners without addressing popular grievances or consider the interests of local Kachin elites.[53] Whatever the real aims of Nay Pyi Daw's policy makers, their decisions continue to affect ethnic nationalities in a disproportionate manner, actively marginalizing their position in the sphere of education, as well as economic and political participation.

However, as with supranational corporations described by Ong, gradations in Myanmar's sovereignty are as much influenced by the central authorities as they are by competing political forces beyond their control. Despite official declarations to

53 A significant exception to this was the temporary suspension of the highly controversial Myitsone dam project by President Thein Sein in late 2011. The geopolitical complexities leading to that decision, insofar as they can be ascertained, remain outside the scope of the present chapter. For an excellent analysis see Kiik (in press).

the contrary, Nay Pyi Daw's authority in the Kachin State remains patchy. In this sense, Callahan's vocabulary on "devolution" of political power (2007, xiv), implying deliberate choice, obscures the fact that central policies have largely failed in their territorializing aims. Integrating the borderlands against territorial fragmentation is simply beyond the powers of both army and civilian cabinets in Nay Pyi Daw.

Examples given in this chapter suggest that Nay Pyi Daw's exercise of its sovereignty in the Kachin State continues to undermine its legitimacy in the minds of smaller ethnic nationalities. Lack of government services and practically non-existent accountability have only deepened this alienation. As in decades past, this continues to reproduce the territorial and ideological divisions in society. In the field of non-state education, one effect of this has been that organisations often choose to work outside the gaze of the state. They do so to protect themselves and their students from arbitrary violence and ideological control. Such was the case for several private schools that my study focuses on. On a larger scale, Nay Pyi Daw's authoritarian governmentality continues to drive Kachin armed opposition that has only gained in legitimacy through heavy-handed attempts to stifle it militarily.

Sovereignty in the Kachin State is wrought with complexities going beyond unbridled violence of a totalitarian state (cf Skidmore 2004; Fink 2001) versus rhizomatic subaltern resistance (cf Scott 2010; Malseed 2008). While I recognise the value of both critiques, my own experience in the Kachin borderworlds confirms what several important studies (see Sadan 2013; Grundy-Warr and Dean 2011; Callahan 2007) have previously suggested: a need for a more nuanced reading of local politics that is able to account for a greater range of relevant institutional actors. The aim of this chapter has been to contextualise subsequent discussions in geographical and bureaucratic realities as seen from government-controlled areas of the Kachin State. I have sought to communicate some of the ways people navigate graduated sovereign spaces, and the constricting effects this can have on students and teachers who are seeking greater integration with educational institutions inside Myanmar and beyond its borders. I now turn to discuss one of the key sites of contest against Myanmar's sovereignty that has emerged in the institutional landscape of schooling.

CHAPTER IV Layered States and Education: Competing Institutions and the consolidation of KIO education apparatus

There was a rapping on the metal door of my room. The principal had gotten ahead of me and was waking me up. Hurriedly, I dressed and ran outside to meet him. The morning was chilly. The principal was already making his way down the dusty path on the campus. I caught up with him outside the kitchen where one of the female students was finishing setting up our breakfast. The college had a dedicated cook but students were expected to help with odds and ends. Our breakfast was a routine that we meticulously followed throughout my stays in Mai Ja Yang. As usual, it was slightly too generous not to feel embarrassed, knowing the meagre means the school had. We spoke of the Chinese shops in town, how most had taken flight amid recent calamities. The casinos had been clamped down upon from across the border. Business was no longer profitable. The principal was nonplussed and even slightly pleased that there were less temptations in town for his students. We finished early for the principal was awaiting more guests. It was the day for the graduation ceremony. I was informed that one of my morning English classes had been cancelled but the other one was still on.

I took a stroll through the campus grounds hoping to meet other teachers. In the big auditorium, a group of young women were practicing choral for the evening. Rows of students carrying clanking heaps of chairs into the hall. In the middle of the courtyard towered a pile of timber. I was joined by two graduates who explained that the logs and branches, upon which a few male students clambered, were cut over several weekends by the students themselves. They would be used for cooking in the following school year. We also chatted about the upcoming ceremony and their careers. There was some excitement in their voices but they said many students have little choice over placements. Decisions, they said, were made for them by the Education Office. One of them was lucky to be moving back to his township with his family. Another would initially stay in Mai Ja Yang but feared she might

be moved to a rural school soon.

I started my English class at eleven, noting straight away that a couple of students were missing. The others – nine of them – apologized for their absence, telling me they were helping with the evening's music. We ran through some reading exercises and started the vocabulary test I had planned. All my classes that month were added out of schedule, on top of the regular curriculum. The principal wanted to make full use of a foreigner's presence so my students were having to work even on the day of graduation. It soon became evident that only two girls had done their lessons. Others said they had had no time, visibly embarrassed. I collected the papers and opted for some conversation training instead. We talked about employment and all but three students repeated what had been said on the subject in the courtyard. The remaining three would be moving in with their families, hopeful of joining the parents' business. I finished the class with some grammar quizzes I had sketched the night before.

After class I lunched with a friend from outside the college. It took some time wrapping my head in a scarf for he was taking me to a tea shop across the town on his motorbike. A foreigner, non-Asian, was still a precarious sight. Avoiding the gaze of Chinese borderguards was something we had been advised of by the KIA. The principal was the only one who stubbornly chose not to take heed of this. My friend was a young Kachin artist whom I had known since my first visit. He was more worried about the fate of the town after the Chinese departed. We also talked about the KIO, he remarking his did not approve of their governing but supported their common cause. He had no plans for staying in Mai Ja Yang for long. There was neither freedom nor audience for his creative work. I returned to the college to offer help with the preparations. To my surprise, the principal had purchased me a brand new longyi *– I had worn trousers throughout my stay – suggesting it would make a good impression. I found the oldest teacher of the college, now retiring, in front of the kitchen, shirtless. Two female students were busy carving deep bruises into his neck and back with a beer can - a common form of local cold medicine. I sat in the sun, going over my notes from the morning and spent the rest of the afternoon with the elderly teacher, writing down his recollections. With a conspiratorial air, he taught me to hide my belt under the* longyi *to keep it from dropping down in front of the crowd.*

A little before five, a handful of students come up to take us to the big hall. It was teeming with crowds. Students were dressed in their Sunday best, clad in college uniforms of white shirts and dark green longyis. My own did not fail to get some wide smiles. Parents were scattered throughout the audience though it was clear that only some local families had been able to attend. The KIO district education officer was sitting in the row of honor together with the principal. Several of town's notables were pointed out to me. Before long, the KIO Education Secretary, Sumlut Gam entered with a group of followers. I opted to sit in the back with the vice principal who had offered to translate the speeches. The front of the stage had been draped in the customary way, a velvet fabric was adorned with carefully scissored paper letters announcing the date and occasion. Tinsel and flowers had been added for effect. The ceremony started with the college secretary introducing the day. A couple of students formally thanked the leadership. Suddenly, I heard my name and first the principal, then the crowds, turned to look for me. I had been given the floor for an impromptu speech. Flushed, I climbed the podium and made it brief. Mine was followed by the Education Secretary (I was told later I had done well to keep mine shorter). He congratulateed the KIO on their mission, recounted some important milestones in the history of revolution, and spent some time on the virtues of education. The graduates were mentioned briefly. He also lamented the drug problem among the Kachin youth and called for a unified stand against the social ills and enemies. After him, another brief speech by the principal who devoted more time on the students, naming outstanding achievers individually. The whole ceremony took about two hours. It was followed by a photo session and dinner. I learned that the KIO education officers from all districts had travelled there for an annual meeting. They had barely made it in time, having been forced to take arduous jungle routes to avoid confronting the Burmese army. It had rained heavily and they had gotten stuck en route. One of the drivers told us with amusement how the honourable convoy had stopped at a small village to spend the night, flustering the villagers. After dinner, entertainment. Loudspeakers were fired up with traditional music played on synthesizers. Three student groups performed. All of a sudden, several SUVs pulled up outside and a delegation from the nearby 3rd Brigade headquarters marched in. They were given front row seats. After watching for a while, the major stood up and climbed the stage. He was in a civilian uniform, a pistol on his belt. Taking the microphone, he performed several songs to joyous ovations. His gentle high-pitched voice was a great contrast with his rank. At the end of his third song – a passionate love ballad –

one of the male students walked up and handed him a rose. The audience was going wild.

The following afternoon, the elderly teacher was helped on the back of a rickshaw and waved off with many tears. It was his third retirement but everyone knew this one would be the last. An hour later, all but a few of the fifty-something students climbed unto an old military truck. Two recruits with bright red scarves and rifles hung on either side. The year was finished and the long journey home to distant townships would begin.

The above scenes were recorded in March 2011, during one of my early visits to the Tachers Training College (TTC) in Mai Ja Yang. The set out the daily rhythm – albeit a festive one – of what is the highest institution of learning in this borderland region. I use these scenes to introduce the topic of educational apparatus of the second major sovereignty in the Kachin State, the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and its military wing, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). In what follows, I am doing to argue three things. First, continuing from the previous chapter, I maintain that the territorial fragmentation of the Union of Myanmar goes deeper than the armed conflicts and geographical isolation. Though these factors have largely created the conditions for the emergence of competing state-like institutions, organisations like the KIO have long established themselves through complex means of statecraft that cannot be reduced to purely military means. Second, more so than the central government that remains largely removed from the local realities, the KIO has been able to take advantage of physical distances from the central state, and establish their reach far into the sparsely populated and rugged highlands. Thus, when stating that the Myanmar state lacks presence and authority over large areas of the Kachin State, this implies more than military control. Third, an important means to this end has been the expansion of the KIO's autonomous apparatus of schooling. Though its scale and capacities remained negligible up until the ceasefire period, it constituted an important method for gaining popular legitimacy beyond the force of arms. Relating to theories of modern formations of ethnicity in Southeast Asia set out in the Introduction (see Lieberman 1978; Keyes 2002), the rise of KIO educational apparatus saw further institutionalisation of ethnicity as a political resource in the hands of Kachin elites.

However, while the leaders of the KIO have long been aware of the uses of formal

education, not least for political socialisation, resource scarcity has indirectly subjugated most of their efforts to the Burmese system. Largely isolated from academic institutions abroad, the KIO would eventually press for an agreement with the central government to allow its students to enrol at universities in Myanmar. This meant adopting a curriculum directed from Yangon (and later Nay Pyi Daw). Moreover, KIO schooling tends to suffer many of the chronic problems found in its larger counterpart. Issues such as scarce and outdated teaching materials, staunch centralisation, lack of teacher autonomy, and minimal salaries are enduring problems on both sides of the institutional divide. These are further exacerbated by the semi-martial administration of the KIO's Education Office and an enduring lack of funding for schools. Data presented in this chapter thus investigates the role of formal education as a central institution of statecraft and calls for a more nuanced understanding of the everyday politics of schooling in this borderworld context.

In the final section of this chapter, I shall briefly look at a case study describing the formation and eventual dissolution of an important civil society initiatives that emerge from KIO areas in the 1990s. Apart from illustrating many of the difficulties that local activists have had to grapple with, it suggests that one of the key pitfalls has been political infighting among the Kachin elites, and overt dependence on a small circle of leaders reluctant to share, much less renounce, their individual authority. As noted in Chapter 2, this constitutes one of the main issues for younger educators, and has encouraged them to strive for relative institutional autonomy, despite their loyalty to organisations such as the KIO and the KBC with their stated political and spiritual goals.

Legacies of pre-independence schooling

The history of secular education in the Kachin Hills, as much as it has been recorded to date, follows somewhat tangential routes. Several historians suggest that Kachin communities in colonial Burma, at least those who lived in or close to population centres like Bhamo, were conscious of the potential of formal schooling as early as the first decades of the 20th century (Sadan 2013; Tegenfeldt 1974). New forms of cultural capital dependent upon and guaranteed by new institutions of formal

schooling that were embedded in the larger economic and geopolitical changes, had come to be invested in the figures of teachers and graduates (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). In part, this owed to the missionary legacy that offered paths for social advancement through theological learning, and a new cosmology that envisioned societies and individuals on paths of progress and modernity (see Chapter 7 below). The rise in the value of schooling was equally a result of the changing economic realities in Burma that presented opportunities for those who had acquired a measure of formal education required for jobs in the military, civil administration and private enterprises.[54]

Importantly, the earliest demands for schooling voiced by Kachin elites were oriented not towards indigenous literacy but rather Burmese and English. In this sense, up until Burmese independence from Britain, the territorializing tendency of the Burmese language in education was carried not so much by conscious policies of Burmanisation, but by the aspirations of Kachin elites to engage the changing economic and cultural horizons.[55] In one of his earlier published works, Kachin anthropologist Maran La Raw pointed out that for the majority of Kachin society during the late colonial period, it was, in fact, the Western missionaries who introduced Burmese script and literary heritage. If anything, these were studiously engaged with by the growing numbers of Kachin intelligentsia (1967). This is significant, for it suggests that the vocal resistance of the post-independence era was due to perceived marginalisation and encroachment upon the Kachin territories by Yangon, to which I shall return below.

54 In this connection it is useful to recall what Nicholas Tapp (1989) has noted in relation to the so-called „“rice-bowl Christian“ among the early Hmong converts. While material benefits were certainly one of the more obvious drivers, Tapp argues that this was generally accompanied by a „complex interweaving of indigenous with Christian practices and beliefs where material and spiritual benefits ... were inectricably mingled“ (Tapp 1989, 70–71). In the Christian, Cannell has more recently suggested that the “potential for meaning contained in Christian doctrine is in fact demonstrably always in excess of any particular social situation to which it might be considered functional” (2006, 38). I am mainly pointing this out in response to Sadan’s materialist reading of the incentives of early Kachin mission schooling (cf. 2013, 374).

55 Rather than exclusively embracing so-called Western markers of modernity, as a reductionist view of missionary contact might assume, early Kachin converts were equally experimenting with Burmese ones. For example, Leach observes Kachin village teachers beginning to construct their houses I Burmese style, their wives wearing Burmese dresses, their children drinking tinned milk (1947, 630).

In the secular sphere, the primary site for attaining formal schooling before independence was service in the British colonial army. Some historical ources suggest that it was education that made serving in the colonial ranks such a desirable option for Kachin elites and their sons. Sadan cites a passage from C. M. Enriquez who, on Christmas Eve of 1918, attended a Kachin *manau* at Sinlum Kaba, the administrative centre of the Kachin Hills area. In the festive settings attended by more than one and a half thousand people, the Kachin leaders expressed their collective interest towards serving in the colonial army. Enriquez says they were "keen upon education, and regard[ed] the Army as the best school for the enlightenment and development of their youths" (cited in Sadan 2013, 212). Three years later, the sole petition advanced by the Kachin leaders to Her Majesty's Commissioner upon his visit to Bhamo was a demand for schools (ibid., 226). What is important for the present analysis is not so much Enriquez's suggestion in the same text that the Kachin elites of the 1920s were already bent on intellectual development of their societies. Given the fact that formal schooling was an entirely novel institution in the Kachin Hills, it would be something of a stretch to assume that their interest was calculated to any considerable degree. It is far more probable that what actually captivated the chiefs was the promise of power that the colonial army carried. As Sadan notes, recruitment afforded a chance that "they could take better control of their own autonomous development in limited association with a modernising Burmese state" (Sadan 2013, 212).

What can be said with some certainty is that, for a long time, the Kachin imaginary of schooling was mainly comprised of two sites, the colonial army and the mission school. As I show in more detail below, both institutions left their imprint via particular forms of discipline, notions of hierarchy and knowledge systems that bore influence on successive generations of Kachin intellectuals and society at large. These legacies were further accentuated by the realities of civil war that followed in the second half of the 20th century, not least since an independent KIO schooling apparatus would first emerge in the context of military and refugee camps.

To sum, by the 1960s, higher education had certainly become more common among urbanised Kachin elites and the leading figures of the 1961 revolution largely came from university backgrounds. As with the Burmese independence movement,

student associations, both theological and secular, proved a fertile ground for recruitment. But the pervasive influence of colonial military and missionary legacies should not be underestimated and a dominant chain-of-command mentality persists in the KIO education system to this day.

Limits to clerical agency

Before moving on to the emergence of the KIO schooling apparatus, I briefly outline why, since its earliest beginnings, it remained largely separate from clerical institutions that were already well established in the field by the 1960s. When one considers the central role of Christianity to the Kachin national ideology today, and the fact that Kachin ministers were, at the start of the revolution, probably the single best-educated class in the society, their marginal role in the nascent KIO schools should give some pause for questions. Particularly of interest are the parallels with contemporary developments in the field of education.

Despite being under considerable political pressure from Buddhist dominated areas, major Christian organisations not only maintained their position but also strengthened it throughout the Socialist period. A central theoretical argument in Herman Tegenfeldt's (1974) missionary history is that the expulsion of foreign missionaries by General Ne Win's government in 1965 in fact carried a positive long-term effect on the institutional capacities and staying power of the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC). This development was by no means predetermined. Despite the number of foreign missionaries remaining among the Kachin at that stage being relatively small, their presence carried significant symbolic value. Though the Scriptures had been translated to Jinghpaw by 1926, and the majority of mission work was being carried out by Kachin and Karen individuals themselves, there still remained a feeling of parentage of the foreign mission staff. This notion was confirmed by several older ministers with whom I spoke about that historical juncture. The initial reaction, at least in mission centres, that followed the expulsions had been one of uncertainty. It was notable that the move coincided with the intensification of open hostilities between the newly formed Kachin revolutionary front and the Burmese army. In the popular Christian imagination, these events intertwined transcendental meanings with politics of national survival. As one older

minister told me in Myitkyina in April 2013:

> *We knew the time of Lord's testing had come and we were very much troubled in our minds. Our faith was strong but our hands were weak. We felt we still needed guidance. I was just a young boy at the time but my father who was a minister told me that we have to keep together and not trust the words of Burmese people.*

Tegenfeldt goes on to argue that this initial shock would soon lead to resourcefulness. The churches were forced to strive for popular leadership in an increasingly oppressive political climate. While the KIA was establishing itself through armed opposition in the uplands of northern Shan State and the Triangle area (see Map 1), major population centres remained out of their shifting de facto control. For a significant part of the Kachin population, it was the Christian organisations, together with traditional clan structures and linguistic affinity, that offered immediate institutionalised frameworks for constructing and maintaining separate communal identity. The fact that churches were allowed to operate in *tatmadaw*- controlled areas throughout the Kachin State meant that they constituted more than sites for religious observance. As I show in chapters below, churches became increasingly central, ideologically and in practice, to the politics of maintaining Kachin linguistic and cultural distinction. Christianity thus remained an important signifier in the national imaginary, and would only grow in importance from the 1960s onwards.

In light of this, one might assume that in the political turmoil of the 1960s, religious organisations would stand at the forefront of Kachin schooling, traditionally one of the key functions of churches, at least in Baptist domains. Yet it appears that this was not the case. First, unlike today, the geographical reach of churches was largely constrained to population centres like Bhamo or Myitkyina than to areas of active insurgency that formed the ever-shifting heartland of KIO sovereignty. Moreover, as Sadan (2013) has pointed out, for the wide majority of populace, Christianity came to be adopted as a central marker for Kachin ethnic identification only *during* the height of the civil war era, and not the late colonial period as the missionary sources and contemporary Kachin clerics claim. As such, Christianity came to be consciously employed in ideological discourse by the political elites. It resonated with threats to

self and community employed to garner legitimacy for particular regimes of governance. In sum, during the period when the KIO had begun its project of secular schooling, Baptist and Catholic churches still lacked the extensive presence and popular support commanded today.

Moreover, in purely practical terms, employing clerics in the service of jungle schools was not an easy task. Following the start of the Kachin revolution, any links to the KIA or other armed factions carried the threat of arrest. Teaching and preaching were hardly exempt. As several high-ranking Kachin education officials recalled, arbitrary executions of suspected sympathisers were not uncommon on either side of the conflict. "The ministers were afraid", Education Secretary Sumlut Gam told me in Laiza, explaining why more clerics, particularly the former staff of the defunct mission schools, were not able to continue their practice in KIA areas.

> *Anyone could be taken by the military when they were suspected. These were violent times. Even sending mail was dangerous. The envelopes were caught and opened and many people were lost because of suspicion. The ministers were educated people. They had taught in mission schools and knew many subjects. Much better than ordinary people. But at that time, KIA never asked for help with teaching unless it was very important time. Everybody had to be careful.*

This quote outlines the fragile territorialities that cut across the Kachin State in those formative years. Then, as now, there was certainly movement of people between the sovereign domains of the KIO and the central government. But these trajectories were constantly wrought with the threat of violence that set significant limits on effective use of human resources outside the military fold. In short, not only were Christian organisations severely curbed in their outreach, but even individual clerics often found it extremely difficult to render their services in the shifting and militarised Kachin enclaves. Though exceptions undoubtedly existed, the nascent revolutionary movement found itself needing to build its own alternative to both state and church schooling.

Geopolitical drivers of KIO schooling

I now turn to look at the emergence of KIO schooling in more detail. As the armed

resistance gathered momentum and expanded its base of popular support through the 1960s, the organisation also started to move towards greater institutional complexity. What had begun as a small uprising against a superior military force, strictly limited both geographically and in numbers, would gradually branch out towards other forms of statecraft. While always marginal to its central aims of military control over territory and resources, schooling constituted a crucial site for quasi-civilian governance that added to the KIO's growing popular legitimacy. Like the Burmese state and missionary enterprises before them, the KIO needed schooling to justify its claim to statehood. It is quite possible that the leaders consciously followed the example of the American Baptist missionaries for whom schools remained a crucial institution for territorial expansion and religious socialisation. However, geopolitical factors would also influence the KIO's decision to maintain a separate and autonomous apparatus of schooling.

A watershed year for KIO schooling was 1978, with the founding of the Department of Education, an entirely new civil administrative branch. On the one hand, this constituted an important symbolic step proving the increasing complexity of fragmented sovereignties in Burma's contested borderlands. On the other hand, this development was also an active response by the ruling elites in Kachinland to larger processes witnessed by the region. Four years earlier, Burma had passed its first constitution since 1947, making at least a formal gesture towards a more civilian mode of governance. This move was not lost to political elites among ethnic nationalities vying for local power. Equally importantly, toward the end of the 1970s, several geopolitical developments had swept the region, affecting local notions of statecraft and political legitimacy. The main influence came from the eastern border with Yunnan.

Michael Schoenhals (2005) has shown how in China, the five year period from 1966 to 1971 brought new draconian measures of governance against the minority populations of Yunnan province, including Jingpo and Lisu tribes. As Beijing vested all meaningful political power in Yunnan to the People's Liberation Army, the Political Frontier Defense (PFD) plan effectively voided existing concessions

towards the *minzu*, or ethnic nationalities.[56] The ensuing wave of violent reforms and pogroms sent an estimated 50,000 people seeking refuge across borders (ibid., 29), many of whom were absorbed by areas controlled by the KIA. In the administrative sphere, these developments put additional strain on KIO leadership trying to maintain popular legitimacy and cohesion in the constantly shifting demographic landscape. Moreover, events taking place in China presented an example of a particular modality of state power that the Kachin leadership at the time must have noticed. Even more than the Socialist junta in Burma, the authorities in Beijing appeared determined to suppress all aspirations for political self-determination among the minorities. It is in light of this that attempts by the KIO to independently strengthen its civilian administration apparatus through the 1970s must be understood. Kachin elites would have known the role institutions of higher education had played in Burmese nationalist movements during the late colonial period, and were aware of the importance of mission schools. Their early insistence on curricular autonomy to which I refer above also shows that they were fully aware of the ideological functions of schooling. Against this background, the latter became another instrument for establishing territorial sovereignty, beyond the force of arms.

Another related development concerns the intricate balance of power in regional politics that emerged out of China's internal policies. By the late 1970s, Beijing was needing to recognise the rather catastrophic results of the PFD plans. The resulting shift in its policies for Yunnan saw a far stronger emphasis on economic development over ideological restructuring. The constitution of 1982 reinstated the *minzu* as a legitimate category in the body of the nation. As Sadan notes, this allowed local minority elites in Yunnan to once again establish limited cultural and economic autonomy for themselves and their enterprises. Cross-border relations with the KIO and other Kachin elites were tolerated and even allowed to strengthen, but only as long as they remained strictly in the sphere of business and limited

56 In 1967, the civilian government of the Yunnan People's Committee and the provincial Chinese Communist Party Committee that had acted as the highest organ of political authority since the Cultural Revolution, came under command of a military commission. This commission professed a new policy of forceful socialist modernisation. The effects were most strongly felt by the national minorities, leading to further economic and cultural impoverishment (Schoenhals 2005, 28–28).

cultural exchange (2013, 356). This formative period can be seen to have further driven the KIO to consolidate its educational apparatus. This move was to further avoid Chinese or Burmese influence, both of which were seen to be at odds with politics of autonomous governance and self-determination of ethnic minority populations in what were perceived as their indigenous territories.

Increased self-assurance gained through foreign relations further supported the consolidation of the KIO's civilian institutions. Throughout the 1970s, the KIO's diplomatic profile had grown considerably, both as a result of greater political foresight of its leadership, and its increasingly lucrative trade opportunities with cross-border partners. In 1967, a KIO delegation had made their first official visit to China; in 1972 the organisation opened offices in Thailand. From 1975 onwards, their political project was led under the chairmanship of Maran Brang Seng, a former school teacher, widely regarded as the KIO's greatest statesman. The military strength of the KIA had likewise been steadily growing. While this brought increasing logistic and administrative burdens, there was also a growing sense of confidence and outside recognition. Historic peace with the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) was reached in 1976. Four years later, in 1980, the first in a series of failed ceasefire talks was held with Yangon. All these developments fostered an image of statehood, but also pressed KIO leadership to expand its administrative apparatus.

Further historical developments in KIO schooling

All of the above processes, together with the realities of armed resistance, would influence the KIO's early ideology of self-sufficiency in educational affairs. From 1963, the first rudimentary jungle schools were being set up in some of areas of Hugawng Valley and Hpakant with strong KIA presence.[57] They were entirely reliant on local families for support. Classes were taught by the more educated among the fighters, or their wives who wanted their children to gain access to basic

57 For much of the historical material that follows owes to discussions on the matter by Sumlut Gam, Tu Ja, Gum Se, Kha Lum, James Lum Dau, Ja Gun, Brang Di and Hpung Gam. I am extremely grateful to them for sharing their time and extensive knowledge with me.

education outside *tatmadaw*-controlled areas.[58] Very rarely, local missionaries would contribute to the classes if they worked in the area, but that was not a common practice for reasons of personal safety noted above. Initial attempts at keeping a separate curriculum meant that village schools would operate strictly in Jinghpaw, with punishments meted out to those speaking Burmese in class.[59] So deep ran the distrust of the educational apparatus of Burma's socialist regime that teachers were ordered by district officers to develop their own methods in geography, mathematics and social sciences.

The first permanent primary schools under the tutelage of the Kachin Independence Council (KIC), the forerunner of the KIO, formed in the Triangle Area as early as 1963-64. The first middle school was opened in Maji Bum to serve a cluster of villages loyal to the Kachin independence movement. Though primary schools were still the main focus for years to come, this remains an important milestone for the KIO's separate educational apparatus. In 1976, Ngum La Secondary School became the first to serve students up to class ten. Several others, such as those in Gum Bau and Nau Ra Ba villages, followed shortly thereafter.

Until the late 1970s, matters pertaining to the management of formal education in KIA-controlled areas remained under the purview of township and district officers, a military rank whose foremost responsibilities were always for the army.[60] Recalled Sumlut Gam,

> *At the time, in our leadership, how to say, those who were educated were less. The one who became a major was also a district* [ninghtawng] *officer. One person. They had many, many responsibilities. They were fighters but they also looked after health*

58 This practice is sometimes followed even today. For example, the Nawng E Hku Mission School that I introduce in more detail later employed a committed mathematics teacher who taught primary school classes in the mornings and donned his All Burma Student Union (ABSU) fatigues to take up his post in a hillside military base in the evenings.

59It is possible that this was a stated ideology with no real grounds. As I show later on, most areas under KIO rule remained monolingual apart from variations in Kachin dialects. When KIO policy shifted in later years to include Burmese as part of its curriculum, finding teachers to even teach the language proved to be an impossible task, let alone there being a threat of overt use among students.

60 The four administrative divisions of KIO referred to here are village, township, district, and division.

and education. At the village level, they became the medical doctors because they decided the use of all medicine. There was always very little, so those in charge had to decide who gets what. The same was for education. The same for schools.

The use of ranking military officers in civilian administrative capacities was very much a matter of maintaining ideological and physical control over respective districts. Even today, the district education officers – nominally a civilian rank – tend to come from a military background. In this framework, loyalty expressed through years of active service remains a stronger qualification than years of schooling passed (tensions around this shall be discussed in more detail in the next chapter). The use of battle-hardened veterans in school administration resulted in chain-of-command mentalities that are still visible in classrooms and teachers' quarters today. This is important, for one can too readily attribute the patriarchal relations in Kachin schools to vague notions of Asian values or, as is often maintained locally, to out-dated methods inherited from the Burmese education system. While there is certainly some truth to both accounts, it is also the case that the early education in KIA areas was likely much more regimented than schools in lower Burma due to the historical trajectories leading to their emergence.

In the first decades of the civil war, the quasi-civilian functions of KIA township officers extended far beyond schooling. They were also in charge of collecting household tax, keeping rudimentary population counts, and gathering intelligence. Given the difficult landscape over which most village clusters were scattered and the lack of reliable channels of communication, the number of daily responsibilities for these officials was considerable (see also Sadan 2013, 334). Moreover, as Sumlut Gam himself stressed in one of our conversations, these men would often lack extensive experience in formal schooling, making their task of managing civilian affairs all the more challenging.

When the KIO opened its separate Education Department in Pajau in 1978, with Mung Du as its first secretary, it thus responded in part to a bureaucratic necessity (see Map 1). The district and township officers were simply overloaded with arious responsibilities. The new quasi-civilian positions were introduced to remedy what the Head Office felt was a failure to adequately administer and develop formal

schooling. However – and this is particularly relevant in view of succeeding discussions on notions of hierarchy in schooling – the military-political elites in the KIO maintained a firm grip on schools. The officers who formerly held responsibility would continue to sit on the board of education as advisers, and their substitutes still had military backgrounds. As such, the separation of civilian administrative and military domains was never fully realised.

A recollection of his school years in the KIO enclaves offered by Hpung Gam, a part-time teacher and linguist, gives some idea of the prevailing conditions in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As he told me during one of our late-night conversations on the outskirts of Laiza in March 2013, his home village had originally been close to N-Bau Dubut. Hpung Gam ended up changing schools almost yearly, partly due to forced flight, and partly due to perceived inadequacy of his teachers. He grew up in a Christian context, with his father having been the first family head in the whole village to convert. Like many of his ability, Hpung Gam continued his education in the Kachin Theological College in Myitkyina. Most of the schools in which he studied through eighth grade had only a single teacher to cover all the subjects. Classrooms were small, ranging from three students to a dozen, in vastly varying age groups.

> *During my fifth year, for example, the school had no teacher for almost the whole year. The students stayed with the soldiers most of the time. We helped them with the chores, cleaned, cooked, and carried things. And sometimes the soldiers would teach us something. That was the year.*

KIA soldiers taking responsibilities for teaching was common in many other contexts. At times, they were simply the best educated in the community, or the most willing to shoulder the responsibility. Hpung Gam recalled a year near the base of 7th battalion of the KIA's 1st Brigade where his uncle, the ranking officer, would carry the lessons for the whole year (for KIA brigade divisions see Map 2).

> *In 1988, I was in class three. At that time, we were fleeing the Burmese soldiers so there was nothing to teach from. No textbooks at all. At last we got one English textbook so we copy down from that. And so make other textbooks. The next year, I had my favourite teacher. There were only four of us in class. Our teacher would*

take us out into the jungle to hunt. We walked the whole day and he kept pointing at birds and plants with their English names. And when we come home in the evening, we had to repeat the words back to him. So we studied for the whole year, not just English but other subjects too. And we learn about hunting and about traditional ways.

As he got older, the teaching responsibility would often be put upon him as the eldest in class. "The school principal was 40 but only had four years of education himself. So I was teaching grade two and three. Of course, my knowledge was very limited. But we had some old textbooks and we repeated from them, every day", Hpung Gam recounts.

The above descriptions, common in their general outlines to most accounts I heard from former students, are not meant to discredit the KIO education system or to downplay its importance on the national scale. As already noted, its very existence suggests crucial political will among the Kachin leaders to build sustainable civil infrastructure. If anything, the historic vignettes testify to a capacity to adapt in conditions of chronic scarcity of resources and displacement. However, it also illustrates that what is meant by a village school in this context blurs the conventional boundaries of civil and military. During the period in question, the whole system was characterised by a loosely structured curricular apparatus and endemic ruptures in the daily functioning of schools. It was partly due to this realisation, and partly due to popular pressure, that the KIO began to revise its educational policy towards the early 1990s.

Reaching out towards the Union, ceasefire of 1994-2011

With no pedagogical alternatives to methods used in the Burmese curriculum and even the older ones from the mission era, the KIO's policy of radical self-sufficiency looked increasingly unrealistic even to its strongest advocates. In particular, the material demands of modern mass education proved impossible to meet without proper institutional resources. Some older teachers with whom I worked would often recall small batches of Burmese textbooks being smuggled into KIO areas. At other times, attempts were made to reconstruct their contents on the spot by those

who had used the actual books in their prior work. As shown in Chapter 2, this shadow economy in educational materials is still an unavoidable reality for many Kachin educators today. This was just one of the ways by which the emerging KIO schooling would remain subjugated to its larger counterpart, even before formally adopting the Burmese curriculum.

A ranking member of the Education Office told me in June 2011, how some Burmese government officials lent their tacit support after the 1994 ceasefire by turning a blind eye to shipments of school textbooks. While the flows of other merchandise past the shifting boundaries of Kachin enclaves were closely monitored and arrested, Burmese language print media intended for schools would, on occasion, find its way past Burmese checkpoints. While it could be debated to what extent this was really part of a conscious campaign of Burmanisation, the fact remains that textbooks thus imported were produced under a curricular regime with very different aims than that of the KIO.

By the early 1990s, the KIO had relocated its headquarters to Laiza, its present capital. Heavy fighting in the previous decade had forced it to abandon many areas formerly under its control, a devastation that did not leave its educational apparatus unscathed. The secondary school in Gum Bau was destroyed in a *tatmadaw* offensive in 1987. A similar fate had met a different secondary school in Nau Ra Ba. Both came to be joined in the new capital that would henceforth serve as one of the two centres of KIO schooling. Since their relocation to Laiza, the KIO and its allied organisations, mostly consisting of religious and humanitarian initiatives, have managed to build a network of over 200 schools spread out over the five administrative districts.[61] To give some sense of the scale, the tables below show the current distribution of schools, staff, and students in both KIO areas and the Kachin State as a whole.[62]

61 KIO Central Education Department internal statistics as of April, 2013.

62 Given the scarcity of reliable data, these figures should be taken as approximate. It is not uncommon, for example, for enrolment rates to be counted on the first day of school, after which attendance drops dramatically. Moreover, during my fieldwork, archival material of the Education Department had been moved across the border into China in fear of government offensives on Laiza.

LEVEL	SCHOOLS	TEACHERS	STUDENTS	TEACHER-STUDENT RATIO
Primary school	166	810	18893	23,3
Middle school	31	203	5634	27,8
Secondary school	3	31	634	20,4
TOTAL	200	1391	25161	

Table 1. Schools, staff, and students in KIO education system 2012-2013

LEVEL	SCHOOLS	TEACHERS	STUDENTS	TEACHER-STUDENT RATIO
Primary school	1178	6106	174232	28,5
Middle school	86	2094	98451	47,0
Secondary school	49	909	25894	28,5
TOTAL	1313	9109	298577	

Table 2. Schools, staff, and students in Myanmar education system. 2008-2009

Up until 1994, the KIO education apparatus remained nominally self-sufficient. However, as already noted, the Burmese curricular material it inevitably relied on meant that it was generally subjugated to the larger system. In this sense, the "territorial entrapment" of the Kachin enclaves described by Karin Dean (2002) has always been more acute in formal schooling than in many other areas of regional development. In the economic sphere, for example, lack of access to and by foreign

markets has long curbed investments. Yet dealing in natural resources and labour would always find ways to avert official scrutiny, not least in conditions of civil war. While this can put immense strain on the local populace and environment, these "shadow economies" (Nordstrom, 2004) have allowed both organisations and individuals to negotiate and even profit from their apparent isolation. Educational exchange, on the other hand, is banished from similar shadows almost by definition. It generally relies on legible credentials tied to both individual and institutional pasts carefully recorded (though, as shown elsewhere in this thesis, exceptions exist even here). While the KIO could long provide a measure of basic education in its domains, its students remained barred from almost any external system, either in Myanmar or abroad, due to lack of convertible accreditations.

Illustration 3
A Burmese language class in a KIO primary school in Mai Ja Yang
July, 2010

As a partial remedy for this impasse, one of the demands set out by Kachin negotiators during the 1994 ceasefire talks was to allow KIO students to join colleges and universities under the Burmese system, a request to which Yangon eventually

consented.[63] This led the KIO to officially adopt the Union curriculum with minor additions of Kachin culture and history. That same year, the first ten KIO students sat the Burmese matriculation exam.

A crucial addition that the new arrangement introduced was the requirement of Burmese language for passing the state exams. In the largely monolingual rural expanse of upland Kachin State, this constituted a significant barrier and established, from the outset, a notable inequality on the national level vis-à-vis native Burmese students (and other nationalities that, by virtue of geography or linguistic affinity, were better equipped to tackle linguistic requirements). Like the majority of Kachin students from the enclaves to whom I spoke, Hpung Gam would shudder at the difficulties faced in his transition from the KIO system to Myitkyina in grade ten.

> *In the village, they had to teach us Burmese. But it was impossible. Nobody spoke anything but Kachin for a hundred miles. So we learned everything in Kachin. So when I got to tenth standard, they gave me a Burmese test. Out of 100, I got 2 marks! Time and again. Everybody laughed at me so finally, the teacher gave me a paper to write twice a week. Before every exam, they made me practice seven times. And finally, by the end, I managed to score 45. The Burmese I speak today, I only learned in the last 10 years, long after school.*

From 1994 up until the renewed hostilities in 2011 that voided the agreement, 724 KIO students had taken their exams in Myanmar and 224 of them had passed. Though the numbers might seem insignificant compared to more than 25,000 currently enrolled at KIO schools, the opportunity afforded by this agreement was arguably one of the most crucial administrative conciliations for integrating the population living in KIO areas with the rest of Myanmar. Importantly for the central theme in this thesis, it benefitted a large number of younger intellectuals from KIO enclaves who would eventually be founding their own schools or be involved in popular activism. Their practice and ideologies grew out of multi-layered educational histories, incorporating institutional experience from KIO and Burmese

63 Here and below I am using the term "KIO students" to refer to those students, Kachin or otherwise, who passed the majority of their schooling under KIO education system. The term does not refer to any other formal affiliation with the KIO.

schools, as well as universities abroad.

It was also one of the most determined steps the KIO has historically taken in support of education, and seems to have coincided with several other policy shifts. Naw Hkawng, the present principal of Nawng E Hku Mission School in Laiza, was one of its early beneficiaries. As he recalled during my first visit to Laiza in 2012, the scholarships that the KIO awarded its students after the agreement enabled him to make a crucial leap that would eventually lead to a theological degree in India.

> *The first two years after 1994, the KIO would give full scholarships to students who take their 11th grade in Burma. When I went to take my final year in Myitkyina, they pay half of that but even this was a lot. My family was so poor I could never go otherwise, not even try. But they pay for the school fees and give us pocket money. At that time, I had never been outside of Laiza in my life. Especially not Myitkyina! When I got there, we got a boarder house with some other Kachin students. It wasn't easy but we had enough. It is a very different place for somebody like me. Even though it's not that far, I didn't know anybody there. But later, that chance was necessary for me to start this* [Nawng E Hku] *here in Laiza. They* [the KIO] *could trust me, because I was local. They want me to return and so they help me.*

Efforts to directly fund higher education through scholarships have remained an exception, rather than a rule, for the KIO since then. However, life histories of several educators attest their lasting impact. Increasing links were also sought with foreign agencies such as Swissaid and Bangkok Research Centre, who were able to advance semi-formal assistance to the Kachin borderworlds. In a historic move, the Japanese embassy in Yangon donated money for building a new campus for the Laiza secondary school.

A crucial structural move was the founding of Teachers Training College (TTC) in the Mai Ja Yang enclave in 1997. Though irregular training camps had been organised for teachers during summer breaks since 1994, there had been no systemic effort to standardise or improve pedagogic qualifications. By opening the TTC, the KIO took the first tangible step in that direction, further cementing its image as a viable state actor in the territories it controlled militarily. In theory, being able to train its own teaching staff would further foster its autonomy from the

central government. As such, it also constituted an important symbolic step, widely recognised across the Kachin society. I return to some of the issues encountered in actual practice in the chapter below. In sum, however, one can see a notable shift through the 1990s in KIO governance over its territories. Outwardly, at least, the organisation sought more complex means of territorialisation, a move that proved successful both in terms of raising its legitimacy and strengthening international networks represented by a diverse class of Kachin intellectuals.

Unfortunately, these developments have since been significantly hampered by the resumption of hostilities between the KIA and the *tatmadaw*. As already mentioned, forced displacement has devastated schooling in large parts of the Kachin State, with no viable alternatives in overpopulated refugee camps. The town of Mai Ja Yang that houses the Teachers Training College has been severely affected by fighting around the area since 2012. Moreover, all prior agreements between the Northern Central Education Department of Myanmar and the KIO became void, and there have been no tangible attempts from either side to reach a solution. Out of 136 KIO students who passed their final exams in Laiza in 2013, not one has so far been able to take their final matriculation exams in Myanmar. At the time of writing, more than 300 students are waiting for the uncertain prospect of an independent college opening in Laiza. In view of the central themes discussed in this thesis, these developments have contributed to efforts by private educators to provide alternative paths for education and development. Though supportive of the political aims of the KIO, many remain critical of the lack of foresight in civilian affairs. These private educators' own efforts can thus be seen as a form of critique, directed against the governing elites on both sides of the conflict.

Political socialisation in the shadows

Before moving on to consider institutional practices in KIO schools more closely, I would like to point out an important implication of the current stagnation in schooling. Both long-standing discrimination against ethnic nationalities via curricular means, and the more recent physical breakdown of communication and exchange between institutions, have contributed to the rise of alternative programmes of political socialisation. These differ from private initiatives discussed

in Chapter 2 for being directly organised by state actors like the KIO. Yet they are also more radical in their political message than regular schools in KIO areas. As such, they function similarly to Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) mass organisations that work to propagate ideologies directly determined by particular political elites. In the Kachin context, the most notable among these has been the Education and Economic Development for Youth (EEDY).

Since its inception, the programme has remained in shadows, mainly due to the radical political message it carries.[64] It was started in 2003, less than a decade after the ceasefire deal of 1994. Held in different locations across the KIO enclaves, it draws participants from across the Kachin State. One alumnus from the first year of the programme, now a prominent member of the KIO, recalled her experience as follows.

> *There were almost 120 students in total* [in 2003]. *Much less than now but it felt very big at the time. And not only for us. The students were travelling from different places across the* [KIO] *border. So KIO used the same transport to gather everybody. The government recorded all their names because they thought it was suspicious that so many young people moved suddenly. But they didn't find out why, so it was OK. But for us, it was very important. There were classes about our real history and culture. We learned how the KIO works. Every day, we did military training also. Boys and girls. We never learned that kind of knowledge before! But it is our history, the history of revolution, that every Kachin youth needs to know.*

Today, the preparations are done with much more care, with separate routes used for transport, and all information being closely guarded until the start of the programme. A testament to the resilience of kinship and church networks, all communication moves by the word of mouth on very short notice, a precaution taken to avoid government suspicion that might endanger the participants. The numbers have almost doubled over the years, particularly after the start of the war. In 2012, around 1560 students participated, aided by hundreds of volunteers, leaders, and alumni. The impressive list of speakers includes prominent public

64 The information below was compiled from interviews conducted between 2012-2013. I am grateful to several anonymous respondents for bringing its relevance to my attention.

figures from the KIO, local NGOs, and the Kachin diaspora abroad who are flown in for the purpose.

Another former student told me how the decision to include non-governmental organisations was reached through intense dialogue. The first few years, only political figures, historians, and officers would manage the curriculum. When plans were made to expand the scope, many people in the society objected. "There were opposing voices. Some asked, 'How is it that first they teach us to make war, then later preach peace?' But then, they accept that we need more knowledge from our leaders in different areas. So now they invite many speakers". Here, too, the distinction between the army and civilian institutions is blurred to the extreme. The paramilitary training alluded to before has been part of the EEDY curriculum from the beginning. One young woman recounted how, during her year in the programme, the students eventually sent representatives to speak with the officers after some participants failed to cope with the strain. "Some university students assembled to talk with the leaders. It was just too much. Many participants were only 13 years old". Some others told me that it was the reason their parents were hesitant to have them join. By and large, however, EEDY appears to enjoy strong popular support, particularly since the start of the war.

Conclusion

Myanmar offers a salient example where, dominant ideologies and normative discourses of international law notwithstanding, post-colonial nationalisms must necessarily be referred to in the plural. Much like Charles Walker has demonstrated in the Peruvian case (1999), in placing the local indigenous populations at the centre of analysis, the history of nationalist movements in Myanmar appears one of complex heterogeneity, divided along the shifting lines of regional and ethnic difference. On the level of military-political elites, the primary agents of these centrifugal trajectories have been well documented (Smith 2007; Smith 1991). However, territorial fragmentation supported by local armies serving competing projects of statecraft constitute just the most visible stratum of political complexities in the contemporary borderworlds of Myanmar.

A part of the organisation's efforts of territorialisation from as early the 1970s, the

KIO education apparatus presents a compelling example of one such project. Evoked by practical necessities and concerns for popular legitimacy, formal schooling became an increasingly instrumental tool for political socialisation through the civil war years. The fact that the KIO leadership negotiated for an informal agreement to integrate their schools with those working in the Myanmar system suggests crucial commitment to civilian governance, while having contributed to a general mood of optimism that pervaded the immediate aftermath of the ceasefire deal.

Despite these positive endeavours, however, the KIO educational apparatus was hampered in its progress over the following decades by a number of structural constraints. Foremost among these were its continued formal isolation from the Union and wider international context, and the chronic lack of resources (cofounded by adherence to a rigid semi-martial administration). In the first instance, this isolation implied geographical distance, as well as institutional seclusion by way of Burmese language academic standards. The way college tracks were organised on the Union level also barred Kachin graduates from some professions, like military academies or medicine, based on ethnicity, political views or regional origins (see also Khun Seng 2013, 5). Similarly to students in the rest of Myanmar, opportunities for studies abroad remained extremely scarce. As for the pervasive hierarchies in the KIO administration of schools and students, I shall be returning to this below. Suffice it here to note that both the lack of professional outlook and the rigid practices of employment have discouraged many among the younger intellectual elites, particularly those commanding greater opportunities and educational credentials, from returning to work for the KIO directly.

If the KIO's current isolation from Myanmar's schooling continues – as seems likely for the unforeseeable future – the organisation will continue to operate in a very difficult situation. Constrained to the enclaves controlled by the KIA, cut off from crucial human and material resources and strained with the ever-growing number of refugees from the war (a large part of them being school-aged children), KIO schooling stands in danger of dropping even further behind the rest of Myanmar. This appears to be something seemingly overlooked by nationalistic Kachin elites whose primary political agenda currently rests elsewhere. The same applies for the

larger international community who has tended to focus on the recent positive changes on the Union level without sufficient attention to regional disparities in areas like the Kachin State. However, as I argued in Chapter 2, important local critiques have emerged in both discourse and practice. The following chapter will continue on this topic by looking at debates around teaching methods and status hierarchies in Kachin schooling.

CHAPTER V Obedience and Progress: Status Hierarchies in Kachin Schooling

The 6am air was chilly, even for the season. I had spent the night at NHTOI, sleeping in the small bamboo house that had been purpose built to accommodate the resident staff. The sun had barely risen and the heavy mist of dawn was wafting in through a door opening into the courtyard. I made my way to the washing room – a structure of intersecting bamboo walls where groups of students would take turns bathing. The water from the well was ice cold. As I made my way back into the teachers' quarters, Brawng Awng was sitting on the stairs, trying to keep himself from shivering. Like the students, he bathed head to toe on most mornings. "Only the elderly and children heat water!" he claimed. Thankfully, water in the tall Chinese thermos was steaming. Two students had brought it in moments before. They had already been busy in the kitchen for an hour. We slurped the warming coffee and chatted about school's food supplies. Having invested in a couple of chickens, the latter had multiplied handsomely and more than a dozen were scuttling across the yard. Brawng Awng was throwing pocketfuls of rice as we spoke. The birds were illegal, as far as the land lease was concerned, and complicated the already tense relationship with their landlady in the Kachin Baptist Convention. But they fed the students and staff.

I had missed the morning devotion organised by a dozen students who lived on the campus but there was a collective prayer at breakfast. The classes began shortly thereafter. My own was due later in the morning so I accompanied Brawng Awng to his, sitting in the back behind two rows. The topic was civic education, delivered in English with Jinghpaw explanations. Like most faculty members at NHTOI, Brawng Awng held a foreign university degree that he had finished in Hong Kong. His expatriate track had brought him back to Myitkyina via several byways, including a stint of writing for an opposition newspaper published in Thailand. His English was excellent and the lesson was as much about language as it was on its subject matter.

I took up the following class without a break. At the time, the school was running with a

single lecture room which accommodated all the students. After an hour and a half of reading exercises, I found Brawng Awng in his small room, typing a funding application. I helped with proofreading the draft and did some edits to a student's application. Some parents came in late afternoon to get information about the program. Two women in brightly embroidered dresses and a elderly man wearing a gleaming white jacket over his longyi. They were from Waimaw, a town across the river south of Myitkyina. It was very warm by now and the visitors were shown into the little office, partly sheltered from the sun. They were served green tea and one of the students brought a plate of Chinese sweets. Brawng Awng and another teacher spent the better part of an hour explaining about the curriculum and campus arrangements. He made a special point about TOEFL qualifications, explaining it would impress employers in Yangon as well as being imperative for further studies. The parents said they already knew two alumni who had told them NHTOI staff helped them secure jobs after graduation. They left pleased. As the parents turned back onto the highway, Brawng Awng explained that he was hoping they would agree to pay a higher fee for their daughter's tuition. They were well off, by the local standards, and could easily afford it. At the time, the annual tuition ranged between $100 and $250, and was decided individually. A few students even had partial scholarships from the school.The staff were constantly having to balance their larger mission with the everyday needs. They felt the classroom needed equipment like projectors but the budget was already stretched to its limits.

It was around 4pm when we rode into town. Brawng Awng had offered to assist me with a couple of interviews, first at the KBC archives, then with another young educator. In the former place, we found the doors bolted and waited for half an hour before leaving a message in one of the offices, hoping to catch the head archivist the following day. We had better luck with the second randevouz later that night. David, the teacher we had come to meet, was already sitting in a small Kachin owned restaurant. On my insistence we ordered grilled fish. David suggested beer. We spoke a little of NHTOI and what their plans for the following semester were. David said his school was both bigger and more modest in its aims, only serving students from low-income families. This led our talk to the links between education and poverty in the Kachin society. Brawng Awng said the lack of political rights was mostly to blame. David replied that Kachin values played a role. He continued,

"Our situation is a little difficult. You see, our Kachin people need good leadership. That is something we know. Because Kachin people lack education and knowledge. All this talk about human rights, and other rights. It is no use if people don't even know their rights. Like my family. I often think about them in this way after I came back to Burma. They are not knowledgeable about their rights so what can they do? This is one thing that good leadership can do to our people. The Western NGOs, they also know this and they give leadership training and support to uplift our future generations. That is why some education organisations have named themselves after Ning Shawng, that is the leader of the manau dance that walks in the front, ahead of everyone. It is a kind of a symbol, the society follows their lead. But the problem is that if the leader does not know where he is going, there will be a problem for everybody. Sometimes, if this happens, the procession gets tangled and the dance is ruined! Today, there are some leaders who know very little, like everyone else. They are uneducated themselves so they do not know the value of education. But they still lead ahead. This is the problem side of Ning Shawng in my opinion. Because they do not listen very well. I think, lacking vision. But most people still follow them because that is what they are used to. They look up to them because of their age and respect. That is why we need more education. People should know the difference. Until that time, the government can do what they want to us"

Introduction

This chapter looks at status hierarchies in the field of formal schooling in Kachin society. The question is particularly important from the viewpoint that educational change, as I argued in the Introduction, is necessarily context-specific and subject to existing cultural norms. Across Kachinland, the long history of militarisation and missionary evangelism have shaped ethical values and everyday practices in important ways. As the ethnographic examples below suggest, their legacies are still acutely present in a social field that has been gradually implementing changes in administration, methodology, and professional ethics. Existing values and practices are increasingly meeting ideas imported from international contexts. I argue that

this has led to tensions between advocates of differing visions, and resonates with wider debates on governance in the Kachin society and Myanmar as a whole.

In relation to the central question posed by this thesis – what has driven the emergence of private schools in the contemporary Kachin State and what informs the choices of the educators – this chapter sketches several institutional characteristics that individual educators with whom I worked indicated as problematic. These characteristics include rigid centralisation and consolidation of institutional authority in particular individuals. In part, these problems have led some younger intellectuals to distance themselves from the established systems of schooling. However, as ethnographic examples in the latter half of the chapter show, similar relationships and practices can also prevail in more progressively oriented private school contexts. This leads me to two conclusions. First, that the practice of formal schooling must necessarily be seen as embedded in a larger complex of social norms and values. Scrutinizing pedagogic methods from a purely technical perspective that treats all problems as essentially universal misses the fact that, in actual practice, they are always situated within existing cultural norms and conventions. Second, in understanding the emergence of private schools and the aims of the younger generation of Kachin educators, their resistance to established status hierarchies forms only part of the picture, leaving further questions to be asked. In an even wider perspective, this chapter underlines the importance of maintaining a more nuanced cultural understanding of formal schooling in Myanmar, particularly in its multiplex local variations, if one hopes to bring about sustainable reforms.

Ethnographic data presented in this chapter comes from observing teacher-student relationships, classroom organisation and teaching methods, and recruitment practices for staff and students in the KIO schools. It is drawn from fieldwork in the KIO enclaves of Laiza and Mai Ja Yang, as well as several private schools located in Myitkyina. This data is complemented by interviews with mature students and educators relating stories from wider areas of the Kachin State than were immediately available to me.

Learner-centred method and the politics of schooling

The questions explored in this chapter first emerged from perceived discrepancies between the local discourses on reforming teaching methods and the actual practices in the schools I visited. Tensions around the so-called progressive methods, most notably the learner-centred approach, are by no means unique to the Kachin context (for a review on comparative literature see Schweisfurth 2011). What started as a trend of curricular reforms in many post-World War II Western economies gradually shifted towards countries on the receiving end of development assistance towards the later half of the 20th century. Since the late 1980s, local governments, transnational aid organisations, and NGOs have laboured towards the popularisation and implementation of learner-centred educational paradigms in disparate global settings, often with little appreciation for local complexities. Mainstream development discourse has tended to treat teaching methods used in formal schooling in utilitarian and apolitical terms. For example, one panel study on developing Asian economies concluded that "human capital formation through school expansion is best thought of as an unevenly applied world-wide process, with little importance attached to regional cultural uniqueness" (Baker and Holsinger 1996).

A growing body of critical literature questions that assumption, arguing that it overlooks inequalities of power both within countries (e.g. central state and regions or individual schools) and between various actors on the larger geopolitical arena (e.g. donors and recipients of development assistance).[65] As Richard Tabulawa has pointed out in his critique, the process was part of a larger paradigm shift towards neo-liberal development wherein democratisation was seen as a necessary prerequisite to economic growth (2003). Drawing on the state of Karnataka, South India, Arathi Sriprakash (2012), shows a systematic failure to implement learner-centred educational policies in rural schools. Her conclusion questions the extent to which planners have recognised the cultural and political tensions inherent in such projects. The current chapter follows her call to pay greater attention to "social and

65 An important strand of this critique, the so-called indigenous knowledge perspective, also scrutinises formal mass schooling as practiced by the modern nation state per se, arguing that it involves particular processes of culutral effacement and destruction of traditional practices and memory (see Kapoor and Shizha 2010).

material assumptions and requisites behind democratic ideals and their local re-contextualisation in under-resourced, socially stratified school contexts" (Sriprakash 2012, 13). While I am less concerned here with discussing the Western hegemony, I maintain that its local effects and contradictions are revealing of the micro-politics of contemporary Kachin society.

On the national scale, the micro-politics of Kachin schooling resonate with wider political transformations in Myanmar. Though met with scepticism by the international observers and locals alike, the controversial parliamentary elections of 2010 have already proven their historical significance. At no point during the last half a century has Myanmar experienced a more significant transition towards integration with the neighbouring ASEAN countries and the larger international community. This has both encouraged and been fostered by internal political reforms. Democratisation, while still a buzzword, has become a legitimate and often-cited term in local political debates. Yet in the conflict-ridden borderworlds that daily experience very different realities, these outward changes have engendered increasingly negative perceptions of change. The atrocities of war, obstruction of Kachin political parties from registration, and the policies of ethnic marginalisation have led to growing distrust of nearly all government reforms. In the context of schooling where more inclusive teaching methods, associated with wider liberal-democratic ideals, are frustrated by existing cultural norms and hierarchies, these wider societal tensions remain significant.

Debates over who holds authority and how it is to be exercised in pedagogical settings resonate with wider problems of national politics. As Bradley Levinson and Mica Pollock point out, "'education' (in schools and throughout everyday life) can be at once an effort to enforce cultural continuity, and an effort to promote cultural change" (2011, 7). While there is much that gets passed down from one generation of Kachin educators to the next, there are always tensions in the process that hold potential for change. This goes for the ideological aims of schooling as well as cultural values of a less political, more technical nature. As noted, my proposed way of analysing these tensions is to look at how the status hierarchies underlying social roles are evoked, enacted and questioned in contemporary schooling. I start my analysis from a point of tension I encountered when first visiting Kachin enclaves in

2010. This was related to the introduction of learner-centred teaching methods and liberal-democratic subjects that some reform-minded educators were promoting. Apparent contradictions and difficulties they met in this process led to me asking whether these stemmed from more than a lack of technical expertise and human resources.

Confirming the predictions of comparative literature on development cited above, the discourse on learner-centred education has evidently established a footing in Northern Myanmar and the KIO enclaves. From my earliest visits to Kachin schools in 2010, I encountered frequent references to the so-called progressive teaching methods, radically different from the existing practice. A few teachers claimed they were actually employing them in practice; others were wishing to do so but stated different obstacles beyond their control.

Almost invariably, reference to such methods by educators presented them as desirable and a necessary prerequisite for developing local schooling. Acronyms like RWCT (*Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking*) or CCA (*Child Centred Approach*) were circulated with enthusiasm, particularly by school administrators. In KIO areas, the Teachers Training College (TTC) in Mai Ja Yang, led by a Newcastle-educated Kachin principal, was labouring to modernise their methods over those in the Burmese system. The Nawng E Hku Mission School with which I worked in Laiza had adopted their whole curriculum from Nagaland, India. The school's Bangalore-educated leader felt it was better suited to prepare students for college education in India and beyond. Informed by sporadic training programmes offered by foreign NGOs across the border, the smaller private schools in Myitkyina were crafting their own approaches from scratch. What most people agreed upon – among educators and the wider Kachin society – was that the curriculum and methods more commonly used in Myanmar proper remain antiquated. Teachers would often criticise issues like rote learning, overcrowded classrooms, scarce or obsolescent teaching aids and so forth. To this was invariably added discrimination against ethnic nationalities, in particular their languages and historical consciousness (see also Metro 2011). On the level of theory, their stance was thus supportive of the majority of tenets of the learner-centred paradigm. This was further supported by ethno-national concerns, framing out-of-date teaching

methods as a wider political issue. Yet underneath this discourse, actual classes proceeded in much the same way they had in the past.

Material constraints to reform

Many of the difficulties faced by teachers in implementing learner-centred teaching methods are due to material constraints. Perhaps most obviously, spatial arrangements of schools and classrooms makes it extremely challenging to conduct more inclusive activities beyond rote repetition. For example, almost all the classrooms I observed lacked windowpanes. The walls were either thinly built or altogether open above the eaves. More often than not, individual answers simply drowned in the voices from the neighbouring classes. The world outside, saturated with street noises, animal chatter, and various other disturbances, tended to blend in with the hum and clamour inside. The following excerpt is from my field notes on one of my own English classes taught at the Nawng E Hku school.

We had started the early morning class (6th standard) with the customary prayer that the students echoed in unison, much amused and excited about the presence of a foreign teacher in front of the blackboard. The noise was deafening, much as it had been the day before when we tried our reading exercises. I noticed that more than half of the students were barely moving their lips in group so I decided to try a different approach. It's one of the smaller classes (12 students) in the school, so I spent last night prepping some simple individual activities. We were to read yesterday's story once more but give everyone a couple of sentences as a warm up. I would then explain new vocabulary. After that, the plan was to ask students to draw a word or character from the story and tell others about it. We barely got past the first part. There were those who stood up and got through their sentences without too much ado. But several students, three girls and one boy, really struggled to make themselves heard at all. The real issue, though, was the class next door. About ten minutes into the bell they started their own reading exercise and I could barely hear my own voice, let alone those of my students! Attention deteriorated instantly. The same thing had happened yesterday, except then the two groups seemed to compete in a voice competition! Afterwards in the teacher room, I

asked Hkaw Lwi, the young woman who had taught the class down the corridor, whether she had noticed it. She had, and argued that it was better to have all students speak at once. "There is no time to listen to each one and they have more courage to speak this way!"

Hkaw Lwi's perspective on the lack of space for individual answers was confirmed by the weight of numbers the KIO schooling was shouldering. In the middle and secondary school classes I observed in 2011, 45 students per teacher was not an uncommon ratio. In a disastrous turn of events for the KIO areas, this number had almost doubled since the start of the war. For example, by mid-2012, there were often more than 60 pupils per teacher at the Laiza Middle School. Classrooms tended to be loosely separated in two. Regular students, clad in green and white uniforms, were sitting in the front and a more ragged looking group of recent refugees in the back. Teachers I spoke to maintained that the refugee students, mostly coming from the mountainous rural areas, were nowhere near the level of their peers, even if they were several years older. Regardless of this discrepancy, the school administrators felt they had little choice but to merge the classes. In purely practical terms, they lacked the capacity for additional teaching hours. The KIO was also under popular pressure to maintain services for the society it claimed to represent and protect. Accommodating the ever-growing wave of school-aged refugee children was an essential and highly visible task. The quality of individual teaching inevitably came to be sacrificed in this challenge of numbers.

During the same period, institutions formally independent from the KIO, such as the Nawng E Hku Mission School, had opted to allow volunteer teachers to use their compound in the evenings, rather than mixing up their regular classes. Yet as already mentioned, even their classes remained less than conducive to student-centred teaching. In both cases, teachers were in a very difficult position to implement changes, both in terms of physical space and their own training. This was particularly true considering that their own educational experience had evolved in much the same context, thus making them far more receptive to methodologies conforming to the existing tradition. In short, their primary source of method was not formal training but imitation (see also Lave 1988).

Arguably the most advanced institution in terms of competence in the KIO areas is the Teachers Training College in the Mai Ja Yang enclave. Yet even here only a select few among the staff had acquired any formal training on methods beyond what has been taught in Myanmar for decades (see Thein Lwin 2007). Occasionally, local teachers were offered a chance to attend workshops in urban centres like Mandalay or Yangon, largely conforming to trends of learner-centred education mentioned above. Since the late 2000s, teachers' associations across the Union have been active in calling for collective action, capacity building and greater autonomy in the education sector. Increasingly, frequent think tanks and training workshops are organised by (I)NGOs such as the Shalom Foundation in cooperation with UNICEF, or Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), generally thought to be the first to have introduced the concept of child-centredness to Myanmar at the turn of the millennium.[66] Yet such initiatives exert only indirect influence on the politically marginalised borderworlds. Due to limitations described in the preceding two chapters, individuals from the Kachin State, and in particular the KIO areas, are only elliptically involved. Illustrative of this trend is the fact that the only collective training the staff at TTC had received by mid-2011 had been a month long crash-course on Child Centred Approach (CCA) after it was officially adopted by the KIO Education Office in 2009. Apart from that, no skill conversion courses or professional conferences had been available locally. According to the vice-principal of the TTC, this constituted the main reason behind the lack of change in actual classroom practice. However, as ethnographic vignettes below suggest, this lack of receptivity was also influenced by the existing culture of schooling. Together with lack of resources, existing values and status hierarchies worked against the *seemingly* technical problems of teacher training and curricular methods too. The following sections will look at these issues in more detail, first through the example of KIO schooling, then widening the scope to cover alternative institutional contexts.

66 Although these organisations are still curbed in their access to the Kachin State proper, both now share a memorandum of understanding with the Myanmar government (UNICEF since 2004, JICA from 2013) and have been running limited projects in central and lower Myanmar for years.

Putting methods into practice: Hierarchies at the Teachers Training College

The very first Kachin school I visited was the Teachers Training College (TTC) already mentioned above. Located in the town of Mai Ya Yang, the once-vibrant centre of the second most important KIO enclave on the border with China, its institutional significance cannot be overstated. Though largely deserted now, the town was formerly a crucial economic hub for the KIO, housing extravagant Chinese casinos (illegal in the motherland), a cigarette factory and dozens of smaller businesses. As such, it was one of the main economic arteries for the autonomous Kachin areas. As noted above, the TTC was founded during the early 1990s as part of a wider set of socially oriented projects by the KIO through which the organisation sought to establish itself as a viable state government both ideologically and in practice. By 2011, the school had graduated 740 students, out of whom around 400 were assigned employment in one of the several hundred KIO schools. Over the period 2010-2011, I made several return visits to the college both as a volunteer teacher and researcher (see Chapter 1). Most of my time was spent running seminars with groups of English teachers studying at the college. Many of them had prior experience working in KIO schools and were completing their degree for further qualifications. They were thus in a good position to discuss questions around teaching methods and wider mentalities in schooling. Over time, we delved into the power dynamics in KIO schools and how the teachers envisioned they should work.

Since my first longer visit to the TTC, I was housed in one of the five rooms on campus intended for guests, directly facing the teacher's quarters. My mornings were spent rehearsing the ever-elusive Jinghpaw intonation with a teacher I had been assigned by the principal. She spoke almost no English, a perfect match for my Jinghpaw at the time. (Unlike me, however, her grasp of English grammar and vocabulary in writing was anything but sparse.) For the most part, our Jinghpaw lessons centred upon repeating combinations of vowels. She would write them down in seemingly endless variations, demonstrating each a few times then signalling me to join in. Although I did not realise it at the time, my teacher's voice reverberating with my every utterance constituted one of the fundamental methods

of instruction in the Kachin classrooms. The practice was also strangely at odds with the insistence on learner-centred methods that were being propagated.

The ubiquitous centrality of teachers in the classroom was mirrored in the administrative hierarchy of the college itself. Almost all decisions from curricular issues to classroom disputes would have to be taken upon by the Principal. Principal Sau Seng, of whom I talk more below, was himself openly critical of the arrangement. Yet, he had not managed to institute any real changes, despite uncertain plans to start a teachers' council at the school. In a valuable study on educational leadership in the KIO schools, Kachin scholar Khun Seng concludes that the working environments are overwhelmingly characterised by "high power distance" leading to passive acceptance of orders by the junior staff (2013, 7). Our regular breakfasts in the school canteen were usually spent in long discussions about higher education in Europe and the world. As already noted, he had studied in the UK for his Master's degree and thus possessed a considerably wider comparative perspective than most of his colleagues. On my part, I was able to follow up on his questions by similar probes on Myanmar, even if it was normally he who led our conversations. This markedly informal context would eventually provide a space for him to voice his concerns. "It is my office, actually, me, who has to take every decision. So the teachers cannot work freely. And they have no motivation to try to change or improve", Sau Seng admitted once at dinner in 2011. "They don't have the information so they cannot plan ahead. Even the students come to me with all their questions because of that issue."

Over the course of months, I was able to have regular conversations with half a dozen teachers who were either employed at the college or enrolled as students for additional qualifications. Most of the formerly working students at the TTC claimed that they were struggling hard to fit what they were taught in theory with the everyday realities in their respective schools. This perplexity was summed up by one young science teachers after an evening game of badminton. Prior to enrolling for secondary school teacher qualifications, Awng Tun had worked for four years in a primary school north of Sinlum.

Most teachers I know try to do what they can but they don't want to change their

ways. We still teach the same we were taught ourselves. Yes, sure, we try to pay more attention to the children who are not so clever, the hopeless ones. But still we need to stand in front of the class with a stick and dictate. It's the only way that works, otherwise, there is no obedience.

This expectation of obedience, of giving heed to or listening [*madat mara ai*], constitutes a central feature in the existing paradigm of Kachin schooling. Younger teachers, in particular, strive to attain this over other professional concerns as they feel under pressure by parents and peers to present an image of control. As the quote above suggests, the blame for not understanding the teacher's message is almost invariably placed on the recipients in what constitutes, as Bourdieu and Passeron have termed in the French context, a "professorial ideology of student incapacity" (1977, 111).[67]

A key area where traditional habits clash with the new educational paradigm is classroom discipline, a field where even the younger generation remains reluctant to change. Talking about this issue with the staff at TTC, my colleagues remained split on the issue. Many agreed that physical punishment should not be necessary. However, as one experienced mathematics tutor told me, "in Kachin schools, we can have no choice because Kachin students are still very weak and undisciplined". This resonates with a larger discourse of the collective body of the nation being immature and thus needing strong leadership.

At the privately owned Nawng E Hku Mission School, to give one example from the KIO controlled town of Laiza, physical punishment remains a principal means of classroom discipline. Invariably teachers enter the class with long bamboo sticks poised under arm. Seldom would a lesson end without it having been used. An illustrative episode took place in one of my 5th grade classes in 2012.[68] During a recital of a passionately nationalistic poem on Gandhi-Ji (Nawng E Hku relied on Christian textbooks imported from Nagaland), a boy in the back row had punched

67 As the subsequent chapters will argue in more detail, the parallels Bourdieu and Passeron draw with the priestly office in this context remain highly topical in the Kachin case.

68 Here, as elsewhere, I shared my time between participant observation and interviews with the school, and volunteer English classes in the mornings.

his desk mate. The girl burst out crying at the top of her lungs, and was beyond consolation from her neighbours or myself. The class had been halted for a good five minutes or so when, spotting a young teacher passing the doorway, I beckoned her for help. As usual, I was blaming my lack of Jinghpaw for my inability to solve the situation and thought she might be able to comfort the girl. Rather than asking what had happened, she straightened her back and marched to the desk where the girl was sobbing. The boy next to her conjured a quivering smile, a common sign of embarrassment and fear. She commanded both to extend their upturned palms. The rod came down in a few quick lashes, and after a whimper or two all became quiet. Turning around, the young teacher momentarily eased her stony expression, shot me a mildly apologetic smile, and stomped out of the room. No further clamour ensued for the remainder of the class.

When I discussed the incident with a couple of other teachers afterwards, they did not find anything odd about the way their colleague had acted. Zau Ring, a male teacher in his late thirties ensured me that this was the only way. "Maybe it is because we Kachin are still not very developed. Our children do not listen so we have to use the bamboo stick. Even parents ask me to do it because they know their children are not obedient". A further comment was added by Esther, a young female teacher in the sciences. "They [the parents] want us to be strict. We need to act like them. Otherwise the children become unruly. They want them to behave at home and in school". For all practical purposes, then, the cane remained a "legitimate mode of imposition" of pedagogical authority (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 16).

Physical punishment has long been recognised as a means of (re)producing and legitimising social hierarchies. Scholars of religion have associated it with literal interpretations and enactments of Biblical cosmologies (Ellison and Sherkat 1993). In gender studies, it has been demonstrated to express masculine cultures in settings as diverse as South Africa (Morrell 2001) and Vietnam (Rydstrøm 2014). In a historical perspective, physical punishment has been shown as instrumental in reproducing colonial hierarchies, both along racial lines and inter-generationally (Ocobock 2012). All of these themes find resonance in the Kachin context, but I would like to underline the local discourse of collective un-readiness that seeks to legitimise the

exercise of physical punishment as a necessary response. This must be seen in the wider context of Kachin ethno-national imaginary that treats the Kachin society in anthropomorphic and familial terms, with the political leadership acting as parents. In this view, discipline is necessary on both individual and collective levels while the nation is still developing, still growing up. This resonates with missionary discourse on collective development (see Chapter 7), and also the ranking hierarchy of the local military traditions where the individual (and collective) is always implicated in existing structures of subordination. In the local political debates, in which private educators are invariably involved, the issue of whether or not the Kachin society should embrace, or is ready for, processes of democratisation are particularly topical. It is in this sense that debates over child-centred methods inevitably transcend matters of pedagogic technicality. It is equally an issue of the reproduction of particular modalities of governance within the Kachin society as a whole, and in the micro-politics of schools more narrowly. I now move to discuss the latter in more detail.

Moral authority and status hierarchies in schooling

The following vignettes offer examples of status hierarchies in schooling from the perspective of both students and teachers. They serve to contextualise further discussion in this chapter by showing how status hierarchies and authority manifest in lived experience in everyday contexts. In light of the wider theoretical discussion around schooling and reproduction, these vignettes suggest how the authority of teachers is reproduced through pedagogic interaction, and how the social agents involved conceptualise this process. In late 2012, Roi Ja, a long-time friend and colleague of mine was finishing her TESOL Master's degree in Thailand. She had invited me over for the Sweet December dinner and to ask for some advice on her studies.[69] After everyone had finished eating, we sat on the floor of her room sipping green tea amid stacks of Xerox copies and lecture notes.

The problem was the end-of-term project that Roi Ja had picked. Interested in

69 In the Kachin Baptist context, Sweet December is celebrated on the first day of December. It is generally a communal event for relatives to gather together for shared worship, sometimes lasting into the early hours of the morning. The custom is not unique to the Kachin and is celebrated in slightly different variations across Christian Myanmar.

curricular development, Roi Ja had chosen to analyse the English programme in her own department. Well-versed in her topic and already a practicing teacher since secondary school, she had outlined a number of issues with the way classes were being organised and assessed. Highly critical in her thinking, she had drafted a series of constructive suggestions for change based on her course literature. Alas, she felt that she had overlooked one crucial issue: her examiner was the head of the very programme she was assessing. She felt that criticizing the programme would inevitably constitute a challenge against her teacher. It was too late to change the topic. It did not matter to Roi Ja she had picked it as an option from a range provided by the class convenor. We spent a good hour discussing the matter, me trying to encourage her not to fear retribution, her arguing that she had gotten herself into serious trouble. Finally she threw up her hands in despair, "We are Asian, *sara*! I cannot say those things to my teacher… she is in the curriculum committee for my English class, it is her programme, I cannot do anything!" Some weeks earlier, she had recounted another story from her early days as an English student in Myitkyina.

> *Everyone was really struggling with teacher Daniel, you know? He looks very soft spoken but actually he is so strict! He gave us so much homework,* sara*, every day, and we worked so long in the classes doing grammar. Actually, you know* sara*, grammar is my favourite. But it was too much. So, finally, I asked, very nicely, if teacher Daniel could give us little less homework.* Alaa*, he got so angry with me! He stood up and told me to leave the programme immediately if I didn't like it. I was really stupid,* sara*, I was the only one who said something, everyone else remained silent!*

While certainly part of a dominant paradigm in schooling, rooted deeply in particular institutional histories, status hierarchies regulating interaction between teachers and students should not be taken as a static cultural legacy. Rather, they are continually maintained and guarded through minute interactions inside and outside formal classroom settings. While the above instances might be read as an example of "interpellation" via particular ideologies of authority, the following vignettes illustrate the dialectic of pedagogic structure and agency whereby, while the "educated person is culturally *produced* in definite sites, the educated person also

culturally *produces* cultural forms" (Levinson and Holland 1996, 14).

The following events that took place though November and December 2012 in Chiang Mai, further illustrate the way cultural hierarchies are enacted and perceived in pedagogic settings. *Sara* Lum Dau was leading a small evening seminar for a group of four reverends who had been sent by the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) for further training in Thailand. The three men and one woman attending were all of different ages, but none were younger than forty. All held prior degrees from the Kachin Theological College (KTC) or the Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT) and had been working in their respective churches for years. Having expected to walk into a seminar for which the elderly teacher had prepared me, I soon realised he would be the only one talking. He begun by relating several stories about the Biblical judges and asked the class about the judges' geographical origins. His probes were met with silence. Visibly satisfied, he proceeded to draw on the blackboard the location of Bethlehem and asked about its surroundings. Jericho would then be added, and Gilgal, from whence he proceeded down to Etam, Hebron, Beersheba, and so forth, until the entire board was criss-crossed with lines and names. Triumphant, he exclaimed with a characteristic grin, "I have established your un-worth!" For the next three hours, *Sara* Lum Dau paced to and fro across the room while lecturing without pausing for breath, and then promptly exclaimed that the seminar was finished and beckoned us to leave.

On other occasions, I was invited to visit his adult English classes at the local KWAT (Kachin Women's Association Thailand) centre or NHTOI in Myitkyina. Frequently, he would spend the entire time reading grammar exercises to a dozen nodding pupils who occasionally repeated a string of sentences in unison. Often, the stated subject of the lesson changed into a lecture on morals, history or daily politics, all presented in Biblical garb. The class would listen, often amused, but without as much as a whisper in reply. At lunchtime, students would occasionally challenge the issues, yet most facts seemed to be accepted without further reflection. In Myitkyina, I could often recognise *Sara* Lum Dau's former students from the characteristic stories they retold.

Some weeks later, *Sara* Lum Dau and I were having dinner in front of his modest

Chiang Mai home. It was located on the ground floor of a two-story tenement building that was formerly home to numerous Kachin migrants. In recent years, the latter had moved to other areas and my teacher, together with a younger woman he had adopted as a helper, were the only ones left. The front of his room, serving as an open-air kitchen, overlooked a sizeable parking lot. It was here we were sharing some rice cakes and dried fish. I had asked him what he thought about inter-generational relations within Kachin schools. "It is like boxing", *Sara* Lum Dau began (he was an avid fan of boxing – not *muay thai* he often pointed out – and spent most of his leisure hours cheering to matches on Thai sports channels). "As you get older, the younger generation starts coming after you more and more. You need to be strong and defend your position. You let your guard down and 'bum!' [giving a jab with his right fist] you're out! And nobody lets you back into the ring. So we have to be on our guard, all the time!"

I draw upon this figure not to suggest that the educational landscape in question functions according to some strict logic of exclusion. As I have already shown, the understaffed system as a whole is highly accommodating of newcomers. Rather, what my interlocutor referred to was an ideological battle for the (re)production of tradition determining cultural hierarchies according to age, experience, and established social roles. It is these hierarchies and their role in the wider political context of the Kachin society that the next part of this chapter explores.

"The political aims of education": Diverging visions in KIO schooling

A key figure to have emerged in the civilian administration of the KIO is Sau Seng, currently the principal of the TTC, of whom I have briefly spoken above. Both intelligent and highly ambitious, Sau Seng belongs to the privileged class of Kachin secular educators who received most of their higher education at universities abroad. Related through marriage to the highest ranks of the KIA, he has nevertheless chosen to maintain a strictly civilian profession, a fact that makes his career rise all the more notable. Though not quite as conspicuous as his kinsmen in the jade trade, Sau Seng certainly stood apart in his appearance. Preferring a peaked cap and slacks to local *longyis*, he rolled through the campus gates every morning in

a huge white sedan that remains a symbol of considerable authority in Mai Ja Yang, and indeed, the rest of Myanmar. A characteristic pursed smile would seldom leave his lips, whether scolding a failed student or courting his superiors in the KIO. Notably, Sau Seng is one of the very few local educators who have benefited from direct funding of their studies by the KIO. After spending some years studying in Bangalore, India, he was given a KIO scholarship to get a Master's degree in Newcastle, England. From there, he moved back to Mai Ja Yang to take up the rectorship of TTC. He then received another grant from the organisation to finish a Doctorate in Bangkok, Thailand, placing him among the highest-qualified educators in the Kachin State. As with most private educators discussed in the final chapter, years spent in Indian, British and Thai universities influenced his disposition towards teaching methodology as well as the relationship between education and politics. From our very first meeting, Sau Seng struck me as a visionary thinker. That image was only reinforced as I got to know him through subsequent years.

Illustration 4
KIO officials and other local notables attending a graduation ceremony of Intensive English Programme (IEP)
Mai Ja Yang, March 2011

In the perception of many younger educators, one of the enduring contradictions of the KIO educational apparatus is that most decisions remain the purview of officials from a strictly military background. Teachers with whom I worked often mentioned this as a cause for the poor performance of their schools. Importantly, all of them characterised themselves as highly patriotic and supportive of the KIO as the legitimate representative government of Kachinland. What they criticised was centralisation in the hands of people with limited formal education. While people seldom voiced mistrust about their political leadership per se, they were seen out of touch with the needs and realities of school-related work, including educational planning. This is crucial, as I argued in Chapter 2, for such critiques form part of a larger shift in perceptions among the younger intellectual elites of legitimate governance and expertise. Here, I will use the example of Principal Sau Seng to illustrate some of these tensions, couched around the issue of political function of schooling in the society.

One such clash of ideas during took place during my work at the TTC in March 2011. Principal Sau Seng and myself had been invited to visit the education officer at the headquarters of the KIA's 3rd Brigade on the outskirts of Mai Ja Yang. Unlike the present principal of TTC, KIO Education Officer remains a quasi-military rank.[70] At the time of my fieldwork, areas under de facto KIA control were split into five divisions, the Mai Ja Yang area falling under the Eastern Division. The latter was further divided into four Districts and each of those had one governing Education Officer (sometimes aided by an assistant). Despite answering to the KIO Central Education Department in Laiza, the men holding these posts come from strictly military backgrounds, some lacking secondary school education. At least formally, all held a termless tenure.

We were received with customary hospitality and were first shown around the orderly base while our host introduced us to several officers. We spent the afternoon in the shade of a camouflaged tarpaulin, sipping tea that was served diligently by a pair of juvenile recruits. An elderly Major performed a number of songs and pushed my meagre knowledge on the topics of golf and fly-fishing, popular pastimes

70 Interestingly, people with clerical background appear to have been excluded from this office at the time of my fieldwork. I am grateful to Nnye La Raw for pointing this out to me.

among the officer corps.[71] As the evening was turning to a close, we retired to one of the offices and our discussion turned to the problems of Kachin education. It was mostly the Education Officer who spoke.

> *We see language as the main issue. The government does not allow teaching in Kachin, even primary school children have to study in Burmese. This is one thing. Another thing is history. We need to teach our children the real history, our history, as it happened. In Burmese schools they never learn about it. They only teach them about Burmese kings, from so long ago! And then they teach them about Aung San and how he freed Burma from the British. But the minority peoples they only teach as rebels. They talk about shameful events, like abductions and drugs. So we have to educate our youth differently. That is our responsibility!*

Such grievances, that scholars like Callahan (Callahan 2003) have also mentioned in relation to Myanmar's ethnic nationalities in general, were repeated to me throughout my fieldwork by people from very different walks of life. I asked the officer about how their actual policies differed in other regards than history and language.

> *You see Mart, we need policy to suit our people. Our people need good leadership and our leaders know the best decisions. Education is very important for our Kachin State. We need many educated people and we need them to stay here, not go to Mandalay or Yangon or Singapore! In our schools we raise national spirit and teach our youth about history. We give good education so that people follow.*

It was at this point that Sau Seng interrupted the officer and added with characteristic zeal, "I agree. Our own education is the key. But as [Paulo] Freire said, 'Education and politics must be separate'! I think that the government should not use schools for politics". It was clear that the last phrase had meant both Nay Pyi Daw and Laiza. His remark was also added to spark further response. Yet the officer finished his tea in a tense silence, stood up, and bid us farewell.

The anecdote described above conveys the often discordant visions held by the

71 A conspicuous presence on the outskirts of Laiza, for example, remains a well-tended golf course, neighboured by refugee camps for the people displaced by the latest conflict.

increasingly vocal civilian elites and the older military leadership in the Kachin society. It also illustrates the debate on the function of those institutions. The aversion felt by some educators towards treating schools as sites of political indoctrination is not necessarily shared by the political elites, including the KIO. "Schools must make Kachin!" as one senior officer from the 3rd Brigade told me. However, it would be a mistake to see the KIO/KIA and their subordinate institutions as following a single political paradigm. As the example above also suggests, the internal workings of the system are more complex than the explicitly stated ideological goals would suggest. That said, when it comes to the everyday management of schools under KIO jurisdiction, there is often little room for individual choice or opinion. The following paragraphs further illustrate the power dynamics within schools, as well as between teachers and KIO administrators.

Coercion and initiative in the KIO education apparatus

The tensions referred to above go beyond the ideological debates around the purpose of schooling, and are manifest in actual practices of recruitment and administration. In both spheres, military authority continues to be exercised, either explicitly or through quasi-civilian institutions. In what follows I bring examples of this from the educational careers of several younger teachers with whom I worked at the TTC. The stories emerged from a set of interviews I conducted with staff and students in the spring of 2012.

I first met Seng Ja in early 2012 when visiting the Mai Ja Yang enclave. She was studying to become an English teacher and was recognised as being at the top of her class by fellow students and teachers. A Lisu, she stood out for her slightly pale features and claimed it had cost her much bullying during school years. In college, though, she was very popular, especially among the boys in her class. She was also famous for her singing voice and would often give performances at the local church and other public events. Fairly confident and of demanding intellect, she was considered exemplary for a young female teacher and was expected by her academic superiors to make a good career.

Yet despite being evidently well-suited for her, teaching had not been her calling for long, and her path towards the profession had been anything but voluntary.

Though we had chatted on the topic several times before, Seng Ja had avoided going into details in the company of her fellow students and colleagues. It was during one of our post-class conversations, as we were left alone on one of the campus' shaded gardens, that she chose to explain the process whereby she had arrived at TTC two years prior.

> *In school I did not like English at all! At that time, I was very bad at English. We only studied a short time. And we had only one textbook. And, I think, the teacher did not speak good English. She was very young. And she did not care very much. In every class, she read out the textbooks to us, tenses, conditionals, and so on. But she could not examine us very well because she did not understand everything that she was teaching us. Whenever she would ask me, I didn't know what to say and everyone laughed. So you can see, I did not want to become an English teacher at all. At that time, I wanted to do something else. I don't know. Maybe have a business like my mother. But I had no choice. I mean, we decided so with our family. The Education Officer told my parents that he needs one child for the TTC. We have lived in Bhamo all our lives but my parents are… traders. They trade in KIO area. So they must accept what he says. I am the oldest sister. I have two young sisters and a brother. And my brother, he wanted to go to the* KTC [Kachin Theological College in Myitkyina] *very much. He wants to become a reverend and he is very smart. So, at that time, I decided that I should go to the TTC. I wanted him to be happy. And when I come here I took the test and they decided that I should take English special class. At first I did not like it. But then I started to like English. And I think I can be useful to my people this way.*

Several elements in her account deserve further elaboration. First is the system of recruitment.[72] As already mentioned in the previous chapter, KIO schools remain equally plagued by a shortage of human resources as those in the rest of Myanmar. The teacher salaries are minimal and the working conditions often difficult. During the period described here (2011-2012), a KIO primary school teacher was paid 140

72 Over the course of my fieldwork, I heard several such accounts from teachers. It should be noted that the importance of these should not be exaggerated. By and large, the application process to the TTC is voluntary and the benefits accrued by the profession remain an attractive prospect in the economically underdeveloped north.

RMB (roughly 25 USD) per month.[73] Half-jokingly, the principal at the TTC would refer to this as their "pocket money", an apt description hinting at relationships of subordination in the schools. As a comparison, students enrolled at the TTC would be given 50 RMB for their monthly allowance (also referred to as "pocket money") by the KIO, plus 2 RMB per day to cover the costs of their food and accommodation. Thus, despite being supplemented by accommodation and an allowance of rice, the teacher salary was meagre even by the local standards. "I am ashamed to tell you Mart", an elderly teacher confessed in April 2011, "but sometimes teacher has to sell sweets during the break. There is no other way to survive, especially if you have a family". According to Nnye La Raw, the vice principal of TTC, the situation in Myanmar as a whole has been so bad that the central authorities have had to issue rules that forbid the teachers enlisting their students for menial jobs.

The education apparatus on both sides of the conflict remains heavily centralised institutionally and ideologically. Most teachers have been forced to accept the reality of things with little recourse to negotiation or resistance. In late April 2011, I was sharing a coffee with Patrick, a young teacher working in a village school near Mai Ja Yang. We had been talking about the difficulties at the school when I asked about his plans for a family. Laughing – out of embarrassment, as Kachin men often do – he retorted "You better not ask this from my parents! They are very worried. I don't earn enough to support my younger siblings. How can I ever get enough money to marry?" Before enrolling at the TTC, the teachers at Patrick's former school had worked unpaid for more than six months. They received some support in rice from the KIO and additional help from the villagers, remaining entirely dependent on both. Several teachers told me how these issues would be exacerbated the further into the hill regions one travels. The teachers themselves have little choice over postings. Recent graduates without strong links to the KIO are particularly vulnerable.

This has led to a situation that bears many similarities to the recruitment practices the KIA uses for its soldiers. For example, education officers can order the parents to

73 Both Burmese kyats and Chinese renminbi circulate in Mai Ja Yang but the latter currency tends to be used for reference. This stands in marked difference from the majority of the Kachin State, further stressing the importance of the border economy for this particular area.

send one of their children to study at the TTC. As Seng Ja's account exemplifies, even wealthier families must often submit to those demands due to relations of patronage underpinning local economies. While easier for many locals than dealing with the corrupt Burmese bureaucracy, trading in the KIO areas requires set permissions from the local officers. These are granted on the basis of taxes and personal contributions determined according to the wealth of individual households or businesses. These also involve the demands on families to send their children to serve in the KIA or one of the civilian institutions working under KIO.

These constraints affect girls and women in a disproportionate manner, further underscoring local gender norms in the context of masculine histories of military and ecclesiastical institutions. Illustrative was Seng Ja's choice of taking the burden for the sake of her brother. As the next chapter explains in more detail, the social status associated with clerical profession in contemporary Kachin society surpasses most other callings. The KBC allows only men to rise to the rank of reverends. Like many, Seng Ja's family made a calculated wager by sending their only male child to the seminary. In addition, most Kachin women with whom I worked felt morally obligated to sacrifice for their brothers. "They are the pride of our family" a 26-year-old teacher told me of her two younger brothers, "my mother and my sisters want them to get the best chance. I don't mind serving for them".

Another issue affecting both reforms and hierarchies across the apparatus of Kachin schooling is the impermanence of staff. On the one hand, this means that teachers generally lack experience in anything beyond basic rote methods. On the other, it contributes to pervasive professional hierarchies whereby junior teachers are expected to follow instructions rather than take initiative. For example, at the Nawng E Hku Mission School that was in a much better position, due to its location and prestige, than most other primary and middle schools in the KIO areas, employing short-term teachers remained an inescapable reality. During successive visits in 2012 and 2013, from which the following excerpts have been gathered, I collaborated with a number of teachers committed to teaching a single year or even a matter of months.

Seng Nan, an Assamese woman in her early thirties who held a degree in business

and finance from India, had travelled to Laiza to work at the school. “I have no idea how to teach young children”, she laughed when I asked about her previous background. “I do it out of duty, for now. I go back to India after this semester, maybe to take another degree in theology”. Maiji, another young teacher from the northern Shan State had recently travelled to Laiza after graduating from the University of Yangon. He had come to see the situation of the IDP camps and to help in relief work. Upon arrival, he was assigned to take up teaching at the Nawng E Hku instead. “I started working immediately! I had never read the Indian textbooks they use. I have no experience in teaching, and the children, they don’t listen to me in class”. Observing his lessons, a small chaos reigned as soon as he laid his bamboo stick on the table. Each recess would see him scrambling to prepare for the next session in the common room while, around the fires at night, he kept lamenting his lack of experience. Despite that, his help at the time was crucial for the school, even if he himself would struggle to justify his presence. “I will teach for two or three months, according to the situation [meaning the war]”. Though a week before, Maiji had only planned on staying for a week or two, his resolve would eventually waver before the semester was out and I did not meet him again when returning the following academic year. Both his and Seng Nan’s positions had been taken by new recruits, equally uncertain of their futures.

It should be stressed that the overall effects of such mobility are not merely negative. In particular, it has made some aspects of social development in the Kachin State highly flexible and has led to quick and adaptive responses to the recent humanitarian crisis. The extensive reach of religious networks has meant that people – mostly volunteers – can be rapidly shifted between areas in need. Likewise, non-state-schooling working on meagre resources has been able to attract temporary staff to quickly fill vacancies. However, this climate has also contributed to the existing hierarchies in schooling by both drawing upon and perpetuating the expectations of subordination by junior teachers. A 2009 report of the KIO Education Department estimated that a mere third of KIO teachers currently employed had received any formal teacher training (cited in Khun Seng 2013, 8). In short, professional training remains minimal. Attempts to institute reforms such as the adoption of learner-centred methods – difficult in even well-staffed and

adequately resourced contexts – remain on the level of public discourse, not actual practice.

Illustration 5
Male student dorm room at the Teachers Training College (TTC)
Mai Ja Yang, March 2011

Even those younger teachers with long-standing commitments and experience would often express their frustration with their lack of authority in curricular and administrative affairs. Michael, a teacher in his thirties, had been working in one of the harder to reach villages in the upstream Mali Hka river roughly 80 miles north of Myitkyina for several years before returning to the TTC for further qualifications. He remained one of my most valued interlocutors during my stay there in 2012. Not only was he highly motivated and outgoing, but his experience from a marginal KIO territoriality offered valuable evidence of how the apparatus of schooling works outside the urban contexts. As with most other teachers with whom I worked, Michael's sense of duty and commitment to KIO's authority were strong.

At the same time, he remained critical towards several aspects of that same authority, illustrating difficulties that teachers are needing to negotiate in their everyday practice. "It is difficult", he once said when I touched upon the subject of teacher's autonomy in KIO schools:

> *What I mean is, there are many things that I can see, things that don't work, but I cannot change them. Some other teachers agree but we cannot do very much. The* [village school] *principal, he is old and he does not understand when we want to change something. All the things I am learning here, I cannot talk about them in the village, people think they are strange and they would not accept me. The principal does not want to change. The older people, they have their own ways and they don't understand. When I talk different to students the principal does not like that. I tell him that the class is too big but he does not listen. It is the same with our Education Officer. He has not much education so he does not understand what we really need. For example, electricity. Last year* [2011]*, a small hydropower engine was built in my village. It works during the rainy season but only households connected to the KIO get power. School gets no electricity! They say that they all studied this way and they don't want to discuss. Our Education Officer only finished 11th standard in the same school.*

The direction of Michael's own career at the time was also illustrative. He had been sent to the TTC for additional training for a year. His talent and experience had not gone unnoticed by the principal who tried convincing him to apply for further study abroad. However, as in many other cases, the choice equally resided with the education officer presiding over the school at which Michael worked. Persuaded by his own sense of duty and pressure from his superiors, he would pass up a number of scholarship opportunities in Thailand or Hong Kong, despite Principal Sau Seng promising to recommend him personally. By the time I was set to leave Mai Ja Yang in mid-2012, Michael was already on a week-long journey back to his village school. This further shows the lack of autonomy teachers currently have, even in matters of personal development.

Several teacher-students at the TTC noted how they were meeting resistance from the parents in trying to improve on the established systems. Echoing the dilemma of

teachers in Terry E. Woronov's (2008) study of the reform process in three Chinese schools, several KIO teachers with whom I worked felt themselves dissuaded on two fronts: first, by the more traditionally minded school administrators, and second, by the community of parents in their locality whose notions of the use of education did not conform to theirs.

Illustration 6
Armed KIA escort returning students to their villages after a semester at the Teachers Training College
Mai Ja Yang, February 2011

Zau Lat, another young but experienced teacher I met at the TTC in 2011, gave a following account of his struggle to convince parents to send their children to school.

> *I think it is better in towns like Mai Ja Yang. Up in the hilly areas where I am from, most people are farmers. Sometimes they don't want to send their children to school. They have no education so they cannot understand. I think they have little education so they do what is their experience. But their experience is the village. When I talk to them about change, they just tell me, angwi sha yo* [go slowly]*! They need children to help them with farm work. I sometimes have to fight with them and bring children*

to school myself. One time, father came to school with some other men and they were very angry with me. So me and principal had to calm everybody. The parents don't want to listen. But I think that every Kachin child needs education, it is the only way if we want to develop. Those hill areas are so remote! But now we try to invite all the parents to school and tell them why they need education. But it is not so easy, you know! How can I tell them that the boy needs to learn English? How can he use that when he never leave the village, they ask?

This was just one among several accounts I heard during my fieldwork that show how some of the ideas introduced at the TTC do, in fact, find their way even to remote mountainous villages. Given sufficient institutional standing, individual reformers such as Sau Seng can make some difference, even if their ideas are frowned upon by the majority. Likewise, teachers like Michael command some influence in their immediate localities. However, it would be naïve to assume that they represent a majority, or that the ideas they carry are necessarily accepted locally. The vignettes above show how, in their daily work, educators can be pitted against resistance by both their superiors in rank and years, as well as the isolated and largely impoverished communities whose daily needs are often at odds with the educational policies. It must also be emphasised that the stories above describe localities that have been fortunate enough to attract the interest of state institutions, including the KIO. With human and material resources dangerously lacking, not all villages are as lucky as Tin Lum. UN data, for example, suggests that there are areas in Northern Myanmar where only 4% of children attend secondary school. In the wider perspective, however, these examples show the teachers negotiating a complex terrain of cultural tradition, governed by a mentality that can be directly at odds with the ideas of social development they are taught, however superficially, in reform-minded institutions.

According to the more vocal local teachers at the TTC, the authoritarian mentality with which the KIO often operates has visibly negative effects on student motivation. A few days before the graduation ceremony, I was sitting with Maji, a teacher in arts and agriculture, near a small pond that had been dug at the back of TTC compound to serve as a fish nursery. The air was filled with excitement. The

water, now drained to the waist level, was dotted with students splashing and stooping for the bottom. It was the eve of the graduation ceremony and the principal had ordered the fish to be caught for the feast. Everyone was expecting a good haul, yet we were in for a surprise. The entire population of fish purchased at the start of the term and fed through the semester had mysteriously vanished! For a good hour, conspiracy theories circulated the banks of the muddy pond but to no avail. Eventually, it was decided that the tiny snails lodging in the mud would have to serve as replacement for the dinner. It was at this point that Maji turned our conversation back to the administrative practices of the KIO Education Department we had been discussing earlier that morning. "See, we [teachers] are not like those fish," he started jokingly,

> *We don't leave when we choose to. Our people do as our leaders tell them. I know many of the students here* [pointing to the water] *who never want to become teachers. They are here because they were ordered. No, usually it is not the parents. If there is a school in the village and the student is smart, the village head will tell the KIO and they send the student to study here* [at the TTC]. *This makes work difficult for the school teachers. Many students have no motivation because of this. They don't want to stand out as hard-working* [laughing]. *That just gives them more responsibility.*

While the above quote exaggerates the point for the sake of its argument, it does highlight the concerns by both staff and students already outlined above. It should also be mentioned that the lack of motivation in formal schooling is still primarily rooted in the underdeveloped economy that fails to generate sufficient incentives for the students, particularly in the impoverished and marginalised rural areas of the Kachin State. Yet it is equally indicative of the fact that there is also a class of educators who perceive faults in the educational apparatus and local practices of governance. In the context of emergent private schooling in the Kachin areas, it provides one additional clue as to which institutional practices the younger educators are criticizing through their practice. However, many of the pervasive cultural norms and status hierarchies are not limited to the centralised systems.

So far, the discussion has mainly touched upon institutions of formal schooling in

the KIO areas. I now turn to a case of a private school in Myitkyina to provide further examples of the cultural tensions presented above. This is particularly relevant, for one would expect to find a less rigidly structured institutional hierarchy here. The staff are largely made up of foreign-educated activists whose cultural horizons have been significantly broadened by their past careers. The following example concerns the tensions that arose from employing a highly reputed elderly teacher to cover a set of extra classes at NHTOI and illustrates some of the status hierarchies as they were manifest this private school context.

Even before I arrived in Myitkyina, I could tell from our correspondence that Thom, one of the three members of board at NHTOI, was especially pleased for having found a much-needed member of staff. He had just reached a tentative agreement with one of the older well-respected teachers to give English classes in the upcoming semester. This came as a relief to everyone since most regular or prospective teachers of NHTOI were still finishing their own studies abroad. Ever anxious to expand, the board had hastily decided to squeeze in a couple of extra courses before spring and dearly needed someone to teach them. Having a senior academic join the programme had been encouraging news. But things were not as simple as they seemed.

For the extra course, a small group of advanced students had been assembled outside of the main term time, most of them looking to apply for competitive foreign scholarships. Helping people like them was NHTOI's central aim. The composition of the class made it both promising and challenging. The school stood to gain some reputation from a batch of potentially successful applicants. However, the group was also more demanding due to several students being older professionals. Things were further complicated by the fact that, rather than relying on funding by donor money, each had covered their fees individually, and were thus expecting appropriate services from the school. Teachers were paid from this money directly. I arrived in Myitkyina when the course was already drawing to its close and was asked to teach some of the evening classes. By the end of the week, I noticed that both Sam and several of the students were visibly frustrated.

That Saturday, Thom and I sat discussing plans for the upcoming semester at the

tiny school library. “We really need a good teacher”, Thom said, “*Sara* Kha Lum is very respected but he is so difficult to deal with! It is impossible to discuss things with him. He just teaches what he likes”. Indeed, for two nights in a row, I was sitting in on the class, watching these advanced students repeat the very basics of English phonetics with a look of veiled incredulity. When Thom learned about this, he threw up his hands in hopelessness. “How could it be? This is not what we agreed to at all”. Since I was also teaching the same class, a few of the older students eventually approached me one night asking for help. “We have been through all this before,” pleaded Philip, an activist and trader who owned a sizeable motor shop. “I am worried for my exam and this is no use to me at all! Please tell Thom we should be doing advanced grammar, not speaking exercises”.

It was assumed that asking a neutral outsider would relieve everyone involved from the daunting task of arguing their case with the teacher directly. After all, polite requests thus far had come to naught. However, as was to be expected, Thom declared that he had already asked for grammar lessons from *Sara* Kha Lum on several occasions. Like Philip, he perceived himself to be in a position where more explicit demands would constitute an affront, jeopardizing their informal contract that was based on good will alone. Eventually, no way out of the quandary was found. The classes continued in a similar vein while some of the more self-confident students skipped the final weeks altogether. It gives some idea of the moral cosmology that almost everyone involved continued to hold the old teacher in highest esteem, even in private, and would hardly have chosen to dispense with his help. These events also exemplify the often tense dialogue between competing cultural paradigms that characterises the current educational landscape. Everyone, save for the old pedagogue, appeared anxious and frustrated in the face of convention that kept them from voicing their concerns in a way that would be deemed acceptable and, more importantly, practically viable. This led to a situation where the discourse on inclusiveness and dialogue that the school's leadership professed and taught remained impracticable in real life. It would seem from the preceding discussion that these tensions exist primarily in intergenerational settings. However, as the following excerpts illustrate, they can be equally present in the daily work of younger educators themselves.

Even before finishing her Master's degree in education from Thailand, Roi Ja, whom I have already mentioned above, had started teaching English at NHTOI during holidays. Despite significant costs and paperwork, she would return to the Kachin State whenever possible and devote her considerable skills to administrative tasks and lessons. Her reasons, as she described them, were twofold. On the one hand, she was under considerable pressure by the senior staff at the school to contribute back to the programme she herself had finished two years prior. It was NHTOI's diploma, together with her excellent TOEFL score, that had allowed her a chance to study in Thailand. On the other hand, she felt deeply committed to the cause of Kachin national development. She saw her role as a teacher as fulfilling those duties. None of her activities was paid in any meaningful sense besides a basic allowance and optional housing on school grounds, but money never came up as an issue.

From our frequent conversations, it emerged that whenever Roi Ja returned to Myanmar, she was struggling to stand on equal grounds with her male colleagues who were slightly older but lacked her formal qualifications. I had noticed as much when sitting in on curricular meetings and the rest of our time on the campus. Additionally, she would join the students in menial tasks around common rooms and the school kitchen, a deeply ingrained cultural expectation to which she seldom objected. More worryingly, though, was that she had very little say in her academic responsibilities. There appeared to be a similar barrier in communicating suggestions for change as had existed between male staff in the previous example.

Every now and then, Roi Ja would complain about the drawn out sessions of reproach that her seniors levelled against her. Most commonly, these reprimands were based on her devoting less time to school affairs than they felt appropriate. Importantly, it was not so much the fact of being reproached but the tone with which it was delivered that roused her protest. After lunch one day she blurted,

> *They talk to me like I was a student! And I just sit there and say 'Yes,* sara*! Of course,* sara*!' Last week I asked Zau Lat* [the head of school] *about applying for a* [American] *scholarship for next year and he sat me down and started talking about first and second priorities in life. He raised his finger like this and said, 'Roi Ja, you have forgotten about your priorities! There are school responsibilities and personal*

responsibilities…' and so on! He would talk and talk and talk...

Performances such as this are not uncommon. On one level, they offer a means for the older staff to establish their moral authority by tapping into the repertoire of cultural norms and expectations. What Zau Lat was chastising Roi Ja for was forgetting her duty for the community, a reproach to which Kachin women are particularly vulnerable. A crucial element of contemporary ethno-nationalist sentiment is the idea of personal sacrifice in the face of larger society. The reprimand could thus be read as a well-calculated attack at the moral self. What is crucial is that the tone used in this encounter precluded the possibility of dialogue. That Roi Ja had taken offense is an example of tensions of this kind; changed expectations are meeting traditional norms in seemingly transposed contexts, nonetheless reproducing existing cultural patterns.

To conclude this chapter, I turn to a final example of how deference to personal authority and personality politics have influenced the emergent field of private education in recent history. In light of the wider theme of private schooling discussed in this thesis, it offers one more explanation as to why the younger class of intellectual elites in the Kachin Society remain disillusioned with the established institutional structures and systems of patronage. Yet the example also illustrates the complex paths that led to the emergence of the relatively autonomous institutions discussed in Chapter 2.

Pan Kachin Development Society (PKDS)

One of the most significant civil society initiatives to emerge in the 1990s was the Pan Kachin Development Society (PKDS). Its early beginnings shortly predate the death of the KIO Chairman Maran Brang Seng (1930-1995), a revolutionary hero and artful diplomat instrumental in finalizing the ceasefire with the former State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in 1994. Characteristically, the organisation was set up to fulfil both political and developmental functions that its members deemed necessary for the Kachin society as a whole. Chief among PKDS's early goals was fostering cultural and political ties with Kachin communities living outside Myanmar, mainly the Jingpos of Yunnan Province, China, and the Singpos

of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in India.[74] Its other mission, more relevant for the present discussion, was educational and would eventually shoulder such programmes as the Pan Kachin College (PKC) that opened in Mai Ja Yang in October 1999. I first met the former collective of PKDS on my pilot research trip to Mai Ja Yang in 2010. We were welcomed in their unpretentious office on the outskirts of the town, shortly before it was dismantled as part of a larger institutional transformation.[75] Physically, the latter meant the organisation changing its location, moving into a smaller bamboo compound in a different part of the town. Symbolically, it changed names, despite its staff remaining largely unchanged. Events leading up to this transformation illustrate some of the potential difficulties met by the emergent Kachin civil society initiatives throughout recent history.

Illustrative of the modus operandi of many such projects was the fact that I had already made acquaintance with some of its staff before entering the Kachin enclaves. A week before, I had met Tu Ja, a broad shouldered Lawngwaw activist who would eventually become one of my closest Kachin friends and colleagues. We were introduced in a small Burmese restaurant in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Under peeling dissident posters he handed us a stack of English and human rights textbooks. Two of my fellow researchers and I were to transport these to his associate in Myitkyina who was supervising a newly founded study programme called NHTOI. During that brief introduction, I could hardly have guessed that we would remain in close collaboration for years to come. Nor that our taking the stack of course literature into Myanmar constituted an inevitable strategy for many similar private schools acting beneath the erratic gaze of the Burmese authorities. Unwittingly, we had become part of a fragile circulation of the lifeblood of non-state education in the Kachin State. Tu Ja had been among the first beneficiaries of the PKDS and had drudged his way through great difficulties since then. I have

74 These efforts fostered significant cultural ties and have been observed to have led to a measure of cultural homogenisation in the trans-border spaces. For example, Sadan notes how Singpo areas in India that had formerly used an odd number of posts for manau rituals, started using a six post plan under influence of ethno-nationalist businesspeople like Bawmwang La Raw who was highly influential in the PKDS (2013, 447).

75 As noted in the introduction, on that first visit I was accompanied by two other Estonian researchers working on Kachin issues.

previously described how he left Myanmar with false identity documents to eventually finish a Bachelor's degree in Hong Kong. During that first meeting, he was leading the precarious life of a Kachin migrant in Thailand while trying to garner resources for the newly founded NHTOI education programme back in Myitkyina (to which I shall be returning in the final chapter). The reason for mentioning our acquaintance here is that, like several other Kachin NGOs today, the NHTOI traces its origins to the PKDS.

It took me more than a year to be able to revisit the topic of the early beginnings of both organisations. As we were sitting in a small restaurant near Myitkyina's train station in late-2012, having both finished our daily classes for NHTOI, Tu Ja told me that the first draft objectives of the PKDS had also been educational. "The idea was to teach these [Kachin] people English… so basically to give college education… so the objective of PKDS was to preserve literacy, literature of the Kachin people, this, of course, meaning Jinghpaw, and then to preserve culture, Kachin culture". It is notable that English language figures here as a crucial component in the preservation of Kachin culture and literacy. Rather than belief in the innate virtues of English, however, this association signifies an effort to break out from the confines of established institutional structures and geographical constraints. As already mentioned, prior to 1994, no college or university in Myanmar would recognise certificates from KIO schools. Though this would eventually change, there were those who sought means for developing formal education outside the governmental fold altogether. The Pan Kachin College (PKC) was one such platform. By operating from Mai Ja Yang, which has easier access from China, the school was designed to attract foreign Anglophone staff from the outset. The main objective was to prepare talented mature students for higher education abroad and then bring them back as a new class of leaders. In that sense, its goals differed markedly from other local programmes such as the Education and Economic Development for Youth (EEDY) discussed earlier who were primarily oriented towards cultivating Kachin national character and maintaining ideological uniformity at home.

Importantly, the PKDS started as an institution formally autonomous from the KIO. For their initial funding, the organisation relied on donations from prominent

Kachin businessmen whose main source of income at the time – as now – was jade. However, the 1994 ceasefire brought heavy repercussions for the Kachin economy whose main locus was the resource-rich Hpakant region. Up to that point, mining activities in the Hpakant area had been controlled by the local elites, many of them Kachin. The ceasefire saw the introduction of licenses issued from Yangon. Most of these were bought up by Chinese companies who duly demarcated their respective holdings. Like many in the Kachin State, Tu Ja saw this as one of the main reasons for the dissolution of the KIO's authority. With no recourse to armed resistance, the Kachin elites could no longer compete for mining contracts and were increasingly driven out of business by the competition. The effects of this were felt throughout the society that, in its virtual isolation, was entirely reliant on established systems of local patronage.

One of the few Kachin who had established a successful business base outside the country was Bawm Wang La Raw. A fervent Kachin nationalist, he became the foremost patron for the PKDS in the aftermath of 1994. By the late 1990s, his financial contributions made up the bulk of the organisation's budget. One of his private homes in Chiang Mai became an office for the PKDS and his name came to be associated with its affairs by most outsiders. "People began to see PKDS – it began to *seemingly* appear – in the eyes of the general public, as one of Bawm Wang La Raw's private organisations", recollects Tu Ja who was also among the first batch of Pan Kachin College graduates in 2001. For his part, Bawm Wang La Raw made no attempts to publicly decry that image, or renounce his authority.

Meanwhile, a series of internal power struggles in the KIO followed. In 2001, a Burmese-backed general, Malizup Zau Mai, who had replaced late Maran Brang Seng as the head of KIO in 1994, was ousted in a coup staged in the KIO's Lai Sin headquarters. In that reshuffling, Bawm Wang La Raw remained on the winning side, backing those who assumed power. The next attempted coup was to have a different outcome for him and his associates. By the late 1990s, it was becoming clear that the ceasefire was bringing little in terms of political progress. At the same time, prominent Kachin elites were increasingly seen as having profited enormously from logging, mining and rental contracts issued in the KIO areas, mainly to foreign extractive industries. Their style of governance had remained opaque and

authoritarian. A decade of uncertain peace was beginning to cast doubts on the precise function of the KIA whose rank and file were said to be increasingly malnourished and prone to drug abuse. It was this popular malcontent that the organisers of the next attempted coup in 2004 latched onto. Precise details of the failed incursion upon KIO's Pajau headquarters remain irrelevant for the present discussion. What concerns the story of PKDS is that, together with the former KIA intelligence chief Col. Lasang Awng Wa, Bawm Wang La Raw was commonly accused of being the coup's mastermind. By the time loyalist forces retook the Pajau headquarters, forcing the usurpers to surrender, Bawm Wang La Raw had already escaped into China. Though he remained physically unscathed, this event permanently smeared his reputation in the eyes of KIO sympathisers at home and abroad.

It was at this point that, in Tu Ja's words, the PKDS found its "roots cut". In late January 2004, a few weeks after the attempted coup, the KIO ordered all PKDS offices to be shut down. The Pan Kachin College in Mai Ja Yang was "taken over" by the KIO and the school renamed as Economics, Education and Computer (EEC) [sic]. The compound was later given to the prestigious Intensive English Programme (IEP) that still operates there today. While the executive reach of KIO could not dispose PKDS's main office in Chiang Mai, inside Myanmar, the PKDS was labelled a political platform of a powerful turncoat. By a similar token, for international donors abreast of Burmese politics, Bawm Wang La Raw's formal position as the chairman of antagonistic Kachin National Organisation (KNO) and of the PKDS became unacceptable.

The remaining PKDS staff tried to salvage the situation by stressing the apolitical nature of the organisation itself. "We didn't want a separate institution, we just wanted Bawm Wang La Raw to step down as a chairman and as an executive director", Tu Ja recounts.

> *KIO* [saw] *PKC* [students] *as recruits for Bawm Wang La Raw. So they cut all the things, you know, including the roots. We know this but Bawm Wang La Raw doesn't accept this… But we, who are working on the front line, have very hard time to have a working relationship with KIO because of this.*

Through official letters and in person, the staff pleaded with Bawm Wang La Raw to renounce his nominal leadership. Quite tellingly, the latter maintained that the PKDS should not be evaluated by outside norms (referring to donors) and that the public perceptions of his office were wrong. Tu Ja recalled the difficulties this presented for the staff.

> *PKDS was seen as a Kachin political organisation. Although we meet donors we cannot say that we work for PKDS inside Burma. So what we want from Bawm Wang La Raw is to publicly announce that he has nothing to do with PKDS.* [Yet] *all the excuse we have received is that PKDS is not like NGO and we [should] understand this as* [we] *are Kachin. Of course, I mean, we understand this! But the thing is that … the hardships are preventing us from working, carrying out our job and in the front line people and the community will suffer from this*. [But] *of course our request for this was rejected.*

The eventual dissolution of PKDS in late 2000s illustrates many of the endemic problems faced by civil society initiatives in the post-ceasefire era, and organisational hierarchies in the Kachin society at large.[76] Its downfall was sealed by political infighting amongst the Kachin elites, incessant pressures of post-war economic realities, and virtual isolation from transparent and sustainable foreign funding. Most importantly for the central problem of this thesis, it hints at the reasons behind young intellectuals' reservations regarding political elites and making their projects overtly dependent on the latter.

> *I have no doubt in my mind that Bawm Wang La Raw is very passionate Kachin who* [is] *ultra-patriotic, so nationalistic, dedicated to the Kachin cause, I have no doubt of this. But his weakness is that he does not seem to receive opinion from outside. … PKDS was started by the well-educated Kachin people, community, rich Kachin businessmen. Eventually … everybody shun and slowly got away … from Bawm Wang La Raw. Because he was not, seemingly, obviously, he was not a very good negotiator, community leader. His idea seems that he is the sole sponsor of this*

76 Though nominally active, PKDS is presently leading a shelf-life of sorts, being discredited by most of its former staff and outsiders and unable to relate to most Kachin communities within Myanmar.

organisation so that all the staff has to listen to his voice. That is where the weak point comes. So many of the educated people shun him.

Like with the Nawng E Hku Mission School in Laiza, however, the brief existence of PKDS/PKC has had a lasting effect. Many of the graduates are now heading local NGO programmes dealing with diverse social issues. One of those is the NHTOI Education Centre in Myitkyina that is working towards very similar ends as the original Pan Kachin College.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the existing status hierarchies in the field of education in the Kachin areas and the changing perceptions around them. In so doing, I have argued that teacher-student relationships and classroom methods cannot be understood outside the wider cultural and historical context. As Amanda Datnow has shown in her work on the micro-politics of curricular change in the US, "teachers are part of a society where power hierarchies exist, and the school is just one of the meso-level institutions where we can see these relations of power played out" (Datnow 1997, 226). However, classrooms constitute much more than arenas for the social forces around them.

As I argued in my introduction, formal education remains one of the key institutions of modern statecraft. Not only are Kachin classrooms a site where existing cultural expectations around age, gender, and other social markers are enacted and (re)produced, but they are also a target of intentional projects of political-socialisation, not least by the KIO. Seen in this light, forms of authority prevailing in KIO and Myanmar classrooms, whether between students and teachers or different staff roles, also reflect something of the ideological projects of governing elites. As I argue in Chapter 7, the contemporary national imagination of the Kachin is built upon and maintained through narratives of youth and adulthood, upbringing and care. The roots of the discourse stretch back into the earliest missionary encounters but have since been appropriated by clerical institutions and secular politico-military elites alike. The insistence on unquestioned deference to authority in schools must thus be understood in the context of a larger ideological universe.

As the final example of PKDS showed, these wider political contests have often complicated development of civil society projects. This has been compounded by leaders' insistence on personal authority and lack of willingness to share, much less renounce, institutional influence. At the same time, this chapter gave further proof of how schools can simultaneously act as sites for individual agency and social change. I now turn to discuss the role of Christianity and Christian organisations in the Kachin society.

CHAPTER VI Brass Buddhas and Leaden Crosses: Religious Plurality & Christian Practice in Contemporary Kachin State

I was sitting with Ja Nu in a large Burmese tea shop not far from the clock tower in central Myitkyina. In the past few nights, someone had spray painted the letters KIA on the roundabout in which it stood. Several roads leading out of town were controlled by checkpoints after dark where plainclothes policemen were shining flash lights under every passing bike seat. Even so, the full length of Myitkyina's unlit streets were impossible to monitor in the night. The tables around us were taken up by groups of Burmese men in longyis *and tank tops. There was rhythmic clatter of beer glasses and laughter. I had been lucky to get hold of Ja Nu for she was not often in Myitkyina and I was leaving for Laiza the following week. We had met during my first visit to Myanmar as she was working for one of the activist organisations in the KIO held areas. Since then, she had been fortunate enough to spend considerable time abroad, for studies, workshops and activist work. She was always brimming with energy and a sort of stoic irony, defiance against the odds. Though we never met in Chiang Mai, I had heard about her activities from several people. Recently, an older Kachin intellectual had gotten into bitter arguments with her on account of feminism. I was impressed by how, despite being half his age, Ja Nu had stood her ground. In the end, both parties remained entrenched in their respective beliefs, she that Kachin women need greater participation in public affairs, he that women's rights are the second biggest threat to Kachin survival after* tatmadaw.

Ja Nu was in the process of trying to secure a scholarship for gender studies program in Australia. We had been talking about the application process, what to expect from the graduate school, and what difference university degrees could make back in the Kachin State. Like many younger activists her age, Ja Nu was fiercely critical about the local academic institutions and remained skeptical about foreign scholars. At the same time, she insisted that both Myanmar and wider world would benefit from more information. Her involvement

with gender-work NGOs had been positive and she wanted to build more international links. "The government, they want to make us quiet, you know, like the old men want women to be obedient. Do this, do that, sit like this, sit like that! But they don't want to hear people talk. That's why it is good to work with the foreigners. But they cannot change very much here in Myanmar. At least not now".

At this point, two young monks walked in and took a table not far from us. Ja Nu pulled a face. "That is one of the big problems in the Kachin State" she said, squinting. "The misunderstanding about religion. The abbots, they so powerful! The Burmese respect them so much and they make many decisions. Even the government, they listen to the abbots, you know? But what are they really? Why is an abbot an important person? Because look, Buddhism, it isn't truly a religion. That is the mistaken opinion that people have. All the world religions, they have one God, right? Even if it is the wrong one. The Muslims have one God, the Jewish people say there is one God, and the Baptist religion, and the Catholics too. God is what makes religion religion. I have been thinking about this and the Buddhists say there is no God. They only have Lord Buddha but Buddha is not God. Even my friends who are Buddhist told me so. So we should really say that Buddhism, it is a kind of philosophy. There are many teachings, all those books, but there is no belief. The Buddhists believe in nothing. So I think it is not right that they call Buddhism a religion. Maybe that is why there is so much conflict?"

INTRODUCTION

The scene above captures something of the tension between religious communities living side by side in the Kachin State. The perspective is that of a young, progressively minded Baptist intellectual who is grappling with issues of equality while questioning the religious claims of Buddhism. It serves as an introduction to the final two chapters devoted to religious identities and organisations that are central to the contemporary Kachin society and Myanmar at large. The first section below re-engages with my argument on territorial fragmentation of contemporary Myanmar introduced in Chapter 3. It does so by giving ethnographic evidence of the heterogeneous religious landscapes of the Kachin State, embodied in architecture, material culture, and ritual events. My aim in this is to draw out religious and political symbols that saturate spaces, places, and geographical

imaginaries. These symbols are inextricably bound with issues of territorial control and constitute important elements in ethno-nationalist identification, and in the threat felt by smaller ethnic nationalities like the Kachin vis-à-vis the dominant Buddhist organisations and Myanmar state. These symbolically saturated spaces derive meaning from more quotidian daily rituals. Conversely, landscapes and religious structures act as physical points of reference for the sentiments constructed and enacted in collective devotional life. To outline the interplay between those two sides, the second part of this chapter focuses on everyday religious practices within the Kachin society itself. As noted by Shampa and Sanjoy Mazumdar, "religious place attachment", that is, one's relationship to particular spaces and places through religious registers, is driven both experientially and through active socialisation (2004). I aim to show that the Christian organisations – key agents of religious socialisation – remain central to the daily life and national imagination. This helps to understand why the particularly Christian visions of development, discussed in the next chapter, hold such an important sway over social life of people and organisations, particularly in the sphere of formal schooling.

I begin by offering several ethnographic vignettes on religious diversity in the contemporary Kachinland. My goal is to show that the existing landscape of religious institutions is ridden with tensions, which both mirror and contribute to the wider political contests in the country. In relation to Kachin Christianity, perceptions of external pressure form a crucial point of reference in the construction of contemporary ethnic identification. Symbolically invested landscapes commonly figure in these perceptions of threat and encroachment. The markers of faith, ethnicity and morality evoked in the everyday discourse are viewed here as both defining the boundaries of self and community in the Barthian sense (1998), as well as constituting a symbolic resource to be drawn upon by the political and religious elites.

Having shown that both physical and symbolic landscapes remain contested on religious grounds, I proceed to look more closely at the role of dominant Christian organisations. I aim to show how and why organisations such as the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) continue to possess extensive institutional reach and legitimacy. The ethnographic vignettes in the final paragraphs offer examples of how their

influence was manifest in the everyday life of my Kachin colleagues. I argue that, at least in the urban centres and intellectual circles, the mundane was always animated by Christian rituals that worked to construct collective identification. Thus, what interests me here is not so much the explicit political aspirations of the clergy (an essential question in its own right) but rather the role that Christianity has long played in the construction of Kachin moral universe(s) and ethnic identification. Specifically, I explore how ethnic identities are largely premised on exclusionary categories that are commonly employed to construct and nurture a moral community of shared Christian values and practices.

It should also be noted that I am here deliberately focusing on the Christian traditions in the Kachin society, particularly the dominant Baptist one. The present analysis leaves aside the equally important revivalist movements of pre-Christian *nat jaw* religion. Yet for the purposes of this thesis I find this emphasis justified on several grounds. Foremost, Christian lifeworlds and institutions occupy an area of the contemporary Kachin society that has received only sporadic attention in the existing literature. This is not to argue against the hugely important studies placing a heavier focus on the continuity of pre-Christian social and political formations (Sadan 2013; Robinne and Sadan 2007; Scott 2010; Leach 1954) or the studiesdone on contemporary geopolitics, borderworlds, and ecologies (Grundy-Warr and Dean 2011; Kiik in press; Kiik 2012; Dean 2002). Rather, my own work seeks to complement and develop their insights by adding another layer of analysis to the existing complexities. I thus feel that my focus on the Christian context is both justified and necessary.

Lastly, it should be noted that the studies cited above generally tend to treat the 'political' as separate from the 'religious' as if analytical categories neatly corresponded to the social realities they seek to explain. The introduction already noted on the problematic of religion as a category traced by Asad (1993), suggesting how seemingly neutral discursive tools are situated historically. While categorical distinctions are often useful for the sake of clarity – and the present work by no means transcends their use – I maintain that their distinction should always be taken to be an analytic device. For most Kachin with whom I worked, political antagonism did not exist outside the horizon of their religious existence in the

world. Likewise, the historical emergence of formal schooling in the Kachin areas was accompanied by the emergence of organised religion. As the next chapter will argue in greater detail, in the historical imagination of contemporary Kachin Christians, images of literacy and modernity are closely associated with evangelical missions and the subsequent 'indigenisation' of the churches. Values people attributed to education, roles enacted by teachers and students, as well as ideas of national development were all commonly – though not always – evoked through images of Christian community.

Religious territorialisation in the Kachin State

Travelling at length in the Kachin State, one thing that strikes the eye and mind is bound to be the way the landscape is saturated in religious structures. Distances between towns and cities are spotted with glittering stupas, pagodas and temples. Somewhat less lustrous but nonetheless imposing are the churches of various denominations reaching heavenward through palms and banyan trees. In urban settings, these are complemented by fine mosques and colourful steps of Hindu and Sikh temples, as well as by the Kachin *manau* squares with their characteristic painted poles.

This heterogeneity belies the popular images of Myanmar as an essentially Theravada Buddhist country. Bamar elites, both robed and uniformed, have long sought to foster that image locally and abroad (Schober 1997; Spiro 1982). This rings especially true in the present transitional stage that is wrought with cultural anxieties and external pressures unseen since the British colonial era. During the three years of my fieldwork across different areas of the Kachin State and Myanmar, I witnessed new Buddhist shrines erected almost monthly. Merit-making through donations for religious construction work, classically scrutinised by Melford Spiro (1966), appears to be as popular among the newly rich as it was with the old guard of the junta years and generations of rulers before them (Taylor 2009; Aung-Thwin 1983). The on-going expansionism is also driven by Nay Pyi Daw's policy to assert Theravada Buddhism as the dominant cultural lineament of the country, whether to attract profits from tourism (Philp and Mercer 1999), or to vie for popular legitimacy. That said, the relationship of Burmese *Sangha* to governments in Yangon

and Nay Pyi Daw has been wrought with complex tensions throughout the recent history. On a superficial level, regimes like the SPDC have fostered an ideology whereby the "state, *Sangha*, and laity are united" in their aims (Philp and Mercer 2002, 1591). Yet despite various incentives of resources and privilege, as well as threats of violence, the *Sangha* has resisted, and at times opposed, central policies, seriously undermining the legitimacy of state elites (Schober 2010; McCarthy 2008; Matthews 2001).

Illustration 7
Manau square in the Mai Ja Yang enclave
March, 2012

This battle for appearances remains highly conspicuous in the Kachin State. The state capital Myitkyina, for example, has recently witnessed the completion of a lavishly renovated temple complex, complete with enormous reclining Buddha, in a popular location on the banks of the Irrawaddy River. Even more conspicuous is the recent construction site in the confluence of Mali Hka and Mai Hka rivers into Irrawaddy less than 30 miles from Myitkyina. It would be hard to find an area more loaded with historical meaning and contemporary dispute in the whole of Kachin State. The Triangle area, as it is commonly referred to, figures as the ancestral homeland of the Jinghpaw tribes. Ironically, it also happens to be an area threatened

with submersion from the controversial Myitsone dam project that has already seen hundreds of villagers forcibly dislocated from the site into a purpose-built façade village devoid of access to arable farmland that used to be their only sustenance. While the Chinese-backed development has been halted (but arguably not terminated), the picturesque confluence between the two tributaries continues to serve as the chief tourist attraction near Myitkyina. And while the rate of visitors is sporadic at best, the local authorities have seen it prudent to erect a gilded concrete stupa on the site.[77] Given the local history and lack of residents new or old, this plan appears absurd but is less so in light of the wider programme of cultural appropriation through Buddhist landmarks.

However, as noted by Catherine Palmer, it remains a quality of all physical landscapes that they are at once able to "contain and convey multiple and often conflicting sets of shared meanings" (cited in Philp and Mercer 2002, 1587). Thus the same roads that exhibit golden shrines clad in prayer beads are also punctuated by white weather-worn crosses adorning the doors of Catholic households. For a Baptist believer familiar with her ward, lack of any prominent symbols of faith in the neighbouring yards might, in fact, be an assurance that she remains surrounded by her immediate religious community. Likewise, I witnessed an elderly father of one of my colleagues become increasingly obsessed with the pervasive sound of handlooms in the night. Tellingly, their rhythmic clatter from an adjoining sweatshop turned unbearable only after he learned that the looms were worked by young *Burmese* girls weaving traditional Kachin dresses.

It is important to note that in popular discourse, symbols of faith are often inseparable from the political grievances about territory and economic marginalisation. Speaking on the topic of post-1994 politics, *Sarama* Seng Ja, a Kachin Baptist educational leader in Yangon, echoed the critical view held by many on the ceasefire period of 1994-2011. We first met in 2012 as I was passing through Yangon en route to the Kachin State. A colleague of mine had suggested I seek her out as an authority on the historical development of schooling. In her seventies, she

77 While foreign visitors amount to an odd pair of backpackers a month who manage to negotiate military roadblocks, local people like to embark on the trip during holidays and social occasions. A handful of food and drink vendors have erected a chain of dwindling restaurants to serve these sporadic visitors.

was a respected figure in church circles and beyond. What makes this and the quotes below so important is the fact that leaders like Seng Ja command significant influence over popular opinion, at least as far as Baptist communities are concerned. Speaking in the safety of her local Baptist church, her opinion was quite vocal.

> *I want to tell you Mart, having that peace* [was] *no good to us! The government people only wanted to take something from us. At that time, so many Burmese soldiers came to the hilly regions and they build pagodas. In every place they occupy, the highest mountains,* [even] *the highest place in Kutkai, there is a pagoda there! They did so many things within 17 years and our people failed to oppose them. Now we have lost oh so much!*

The identification of the Burmese military with the construction of religious structures that this excerpt illustrates is significant. According to this view, the agency of Buddhist *Sangha* is nigh coterminous with that of the *tatmadaw*. Both are implicated in encroachment upon Kachin territories and Kachin self-determination. It is also illustrative of the feelings of frustration experienced at the sight of Buddhist edifices. A temple or a shrine becomes much more than a place of worship for the religious Other. It is, in very real sense, a disruptive presence whose appearance signifies a gradual appropriation of Kachin homeland, much like the Chinese hydroelectric dams described by Laur Kiik (in press).

These feelings of marginalisation have been heightened by central policies that are seen as stifling Christian practice and expansion. A law prohibiting construction of religious structures without special government permission has been in effect since 1988. That year, the former State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) suspended the 1974 Constitution stipulating limited religious freedoms to all legal nationalities in Burma. The Kachin Christians, consciously struggling for cultural and religious self-preservation, have felt such legal measures to be targeting them directly. "You can build a new pagoda every week" an elderly Zaiwa pastor told me in 2012 in Myitkyina, a glint of indignation in his eyes, "but even one chapel is a crime".

Despite long-standing pressure through legal means, Christian architecture remains highly visible throughout the Kachin population centres and beyond. Church

buildings, in particular, many dating from the early 20th century, nestle in shaded churchyards. Often, they are the only stone structures in the whole district. Major organisations such as the KBC and St. Columban Mission command significant landholdings that further assert their visibility. Church compounds are extensive, housing various auxiliary buildings and wide open spaces for social activities, and cater to hundreds of attendees on a regular basis. The Buddhist practice of erecting stupas on mountain-tops has also found response from Christian organisations, particularly in KIO areas. 'Prayer mountains' are a prominent feature on the skyline of both Laiza and Mai Ja Yang, comprising of massive crosses erected over prayer rooms or consecrated grounds. They serve as places for a quiet retreat but also act as powerful visual cues of religious and political territoriality.

Illustration 8
Prayer mountain in the Mai Ja Yang enclave
June, 2011

Symbols and rituals of faith contested

A revealing incident around religious symbols in the public space, illustrative of the

common perceptions of existential threat that influence inter-ethnic relations across a range of institutional contexts including formal education, took place at the height of the war in June 2013. It illustrates the tensions around politics of ethnic self-representation expressed in a religious idiom. Following in the footsteps of their brethren earlier that year, a group of Buddhist monks had set out on a peace march from Mandalay to raise popular awareness about the on-going conflict. Whereas the first delegation had earned a largely amiable welcome by the KIO and Laiza's populace alike, the second party was met with more ambivalence. Part of the reason was the choice of medium for passing their symbolic message. For weeks, the monks had collected empty bullet shells left in the wake of battles. Out of this weighty media the peace marchers crafted a pair of statues. The bigger of these was a Buddha that had allegedly taken a month to assemble. The second was a Christian cross, made from the same stock but somewhat smaller in stature. Once this offering reached Laiza it was promptly refused by the KIO, though the monks were later able to convince the authorities to at least keep the cross. The Buddha was ordered to be taken back to Mandalay and the monks were said to have promised to donate it to the *tatmadaw* instead.

What is telling in this anecdote is not so much the fact of prompt refusal. After all, the KIO was working under significant internal and external pressure. Receiving a brass Buddha in their capital could have been interpreted as a sign of weakness. Moreover, while nominally independent, the KIO remains tightly knit with the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) in practice, and the latter would have doubtlessly used their influence against a material symbol of Buddhism. What is more interesting is how the matter was later debated in popular circles. One of my friends, a young but high-profile Kachin peace activist and a devout Baptist, reasoned on his Facebook feed whether the gesture might not have been a "Trojan Horse to Laiza". Implied here was that the highly charged symbol, though presented as a gesture for peace, was actually intended to foment tensions between the Christian Kachin and their Buddhist allies in the area (such as the All Burma Frontier of Student Unions (ABFSU) that has a military base on the outskirts of Laiza). Several of my teacher colleagues discarded the march as disingenuous, pointing out, as one young man did, that "it was just for show" and that the real aim

had been ideological. "They want to convince the world that Burma is a Buddhist country. … But Laiza is not Buddhist! We are Christian! Why don't they take that Buddha to Nay Pyi Daw? Put it on hill and make peace in the heart of Thein Sein". The spatial allusion was even clearer in the Facebook feed mentioned above. "I am quite sure the peace rally group has every good intention for the creation of another space for the Buddha statue. … [But] Buddhist families in Laiza have their own sacred shrines in their home, and could have access to the closest monastery located in La Ja Yang, just six miles away from Laiza, if the government troops there allow".

The above fragment illustrates the anxieties prevalent in the popular discourse about religious territoriality. In this context, even the presence of a statue invested with Biblical idolatry is seen as contradicting the spatial integrity of a Kachin-Christian domain (to a lesser extent, the cross was said by some to have been an essentially Catholic symbol, a connotation the marching monks might well have overlooked). It also shows how different ethnic or religious communities can interpret same symbols in a radically different light, particularly if these interpretations are reinforced by vocal advocates of Christian political ideology. The object, Keane has noted, "is mute" (2006, 311). The intepretations of even charged religious symbols cannot be determined in advance. Despite the close physical proximity of communities of different faiths and their various associations through trade and services, their moral cosmologies remain fairly isolated. On the Kachin side, this separation is actively maintained by invested elites such as local church leaders and Christian youth organisations.

An example of religious protectionism in the public sphere is the Buddhist New Year festivals. In Myanmar, the *Thingyan* celebrations are held in April (the first month of *Tagu* in the Burmese calendar) and usually last for several days. Apart from organised rites and concerts, the festivities feature a strong popular element, most notably the casting of water in streets and yards that often turns into joyous mayhem. Every Kachin Baptist youth organisation I knew made a concerted effort to gather its young during the festival and organise Christian camps outside the towns and cities. This was equally true for the Wunpawng Christian Church in Chiang Mai, Thailand where the leaders did their best to keep the Kachin youth away from the *Songkran* New Year activities. Half-compulsory excursions organised

as substitutes consisted of devotional services, hymn singing, and games run by the active youth leaders. On one such occasion in Thailand, we visited a beautiful creek where the church had rented a sizeable shelter for its services. All participants were driven to the spot on the back of pickup trucks owned or rented by the local church. We set out early in the morning and the road passed quickly amid song and chatter. The youth were certainly out to have fun away from their usual responsibilities at home and workplace, as much as joining religious communion. Sharing a table with the elder pastors at lunch, one of them summarised the importance of the retreat thus.

> *We have a responsibility for taking care of the youth. These days, so many Kachin become drug addicts or get into prostitution or get other problems. This is because they are lured into other things and forget they are Kachin and they even forget God. We are not Buddhist people so we must protect our youth. Especially the young people, they are very curious. So all these festivals, it is our responsibility to guide our youth. We must do this to protect the future of our Kachin nation!*

From the perspective of the youth in attendance, there was considerable peer pressure to attend. One the way back to town, I asked some of my younger friends whether they felt it was important to maintain distance from the Buddhist festivals. Catherine, a student at the Payap University who had recently arrived from the Kachin State, concluded the discussion that followed: "We have nothing to do with Buddhism so it is better that we are far away! Actually, *sara*, the water festival is the worst! They are everywhere and you cannot move around if you need to. And it is much worse in Burma than here! But the real problem is, there is no choice for us". At that point, La Ja, one of the older boys cut in,

> *The government has a simple plan. They want everybody to think our Kachin State is Buddhist. So they support these festivals all the time! But the Christians cannot make their own! Everywhere you can see just pagodas. That is because they don't allow* [us] *to build churches anymore. So we are hidden and slowly, slowly they try to make the Kachin disappear. There are so many programmes in the government.*

In line with this reasoning, the 2013 (2557) *Thingyan* celebrations in Myitkyina were widely rumoured to have garnered more financial support from the central

government than any other municipality in the country. The local speculation was that this was done to convince the rest of Myanmar that everything was normal in the warring north and that carefree celebrations were the order of the day. Here, as elsewhere, outwardly religious observances were conflated with apprehension towards the state, the two being a manifestation of the same will. Thus, while Nay Pyi Daw's attempts to identify their aims with those of the *Sangha* might hold little purchase in most of the Buddhist Myanmar and scholarly analyses, this distinction remains far less obvious from the perspective of Kachin communities in the North.

The widely-held idea of constant pressure through Buddhist statecraft was exemplified in a discussion I had with a young teacher in Laiza a few weeks later. "There are so many monks everywhere! What use are the monks? They do nothing for the country, no work, nothing! That is the reason we are so poor. Everywhere you go, train station, tea shop, every street… the government and abbots, Nay Pyi Daw just support the monks to be in every place!" These passages might seem exaggerated but are, in fact, illustrative of a shared feeling of siege characteristic of the contemporary Kachin ethno-national imagination. Boundaries, both physical and symbolic, are felt to be tightening around the already constrained collective body of the nation. Not only that, but critique against the religious other is cast in an idiom of national development, linking existential anxieties with utilitarian concern.

Popular interpretations of these tensions are firmly embedded in the historical imaginary, particularly the events directly preceding the British transfer of power and the two decades of uneasy parliamentary power that followed in their wake. In terms of religious territoriality, two events are commonly emphasised in local narratives: Prime Minister U Nu's State Religion Promotion Act (1961), which effectively made Buddhism the state religion; and the concession of three Kachin villages of Kawlum, Kanhpang, and Hpimaw to the People's Republic of China with the Burma-China Boundary Treaty (1960). A contemporary account of the disputes around the villages claimed by the People's Liberation Army notes that the British had originally "seized them over Chinese protests" and had subsequently accepted, though not honoured, terms for a lease (Maung Maung 1961, 40). Though Kachin leaders did accompany Prime Minister U Nu to Beijing for the talks in 1956, their demands were disregarded. By the time Gen. Ne Win brokered the final deal with

Premier Zhou Enlai in the name of caretaker government, the Kachin were already excluded from the negotiations. On April 28, 1960, U Nu led the briefly reinstated parliament to ratify the treaty and the villages became formally part of China.

Illustration 9
A pastoral view on the hills surrounding the town of Mai Ja Yang. Note the juxtaposition of a Buddhist shrine on the left, a Christian cross in the centre and a traditional Kachin house on the right hand side of the photo
July, 2010

By the early 1960s, significant distrust had been cultivated towards the central government and there was increasing frustration among Kachin elites about their lack of representation in the Parliament. The State Religion Promotion Act was felt to have been a direct encroachment on religious freedoms and a bid to further curb the authority of Kachin leaders. The transfer of three villages bore an equal political significance. It set a precedent whereby the territorial (and communal) integrity of the Kachin State was compromised by decisions taken in Yangon without involving representative voices from the Kachin Hills. The outcome of border negotiations in Beijing was ultimately premised upon the notion that the British colonial authorities had recognised the area as belonging to China and that, therefore, the latter was to be justifiably returned. The implication was that the Kachin political elites, who saw

themselves as the rightful inhabitants of the area as recognised by the Panglong agreement, had no actual say over territorial disputes in the international arena.

An important public function of Kachin Baptist leaders has long been to communicate (and research) historical knowledge of politically significant events such as these. A demonstrative example can be drawn from one of the lecture series that was organised by the Kachin expatriate community in Chiang Mai, Thailand in early 2013. These somewhat irregular gatherings were popular with the youth and older people alike, drawing audiences from the local church congregations, activist circles and labour migrants. About 60 people had gathered that night to hear a talk given by Rev. Ja Gun, a (former) academic dean of the Kachin Theological College (KTC) for 33 years. In local academic tradition, Rev. Ja Gun is one of the most respected historians of Kachin culture and languages in Myanmar. A graduate of Rangoon University, he joined the college in 1978 and was the first person to have done so holding a secular degree in addition to a theological one. Having retired from the KTC, he remains a frequent contributor in Kachin journals and has committed himself to the task of lecturing KIA soldiers about Kachin history.

> *The Kachin were known to be fierce warriors. We used to be very wild and very strong. The Kachin chiefs owned the mountains. This is in our nature because we are mountain people and we live together with the forest. The Kachin chiefs know the land very well so we are the strongest. When Burmese kings wanted to go to China, they had to consult Kachin chiefs every time. And they pay the Kachin so we allow them to pass to China. And when they return from China they have to pay again!* [approving laughter from the audience] *The Shans and other peoples also had to pay even though they were more civilized than us at that time.*

Inherent in this historical imaginary is an attempt to reconcile the perceived backwardness of the traditional mountain dwellers with a primordial strength that is literally rooted in the hills. In so doing, it employs nationalistic language of morality which, as Michael Herzfeld notes, is essentially one of "inclusion and exclusion" (1997, 46). In the resulting narrative, the fierce independence from outsiders stems from the warlike disposition of Kachin forefathers who lived in harmony with their habitat. Moral references to Shan, Chin, and other peoples in

which the actors are hierarchically positioned, are often repeated in folk histories. Consider, for example, the following reference from a lecture Rev. Ja Gun delivered to a slightly smaller Kachin audience in Bangkok:

> *Before the official Panglong agreement was signed, the Shan leader came to the Kachin to ask for protection. The Shan did not have an army and this is why they came to us. The Kachin State was still very raw at the time. Tigers ate most the pigs that the Shan had brought with them on the road. Then, the Shan tried to convince the Kachin not to join the Union but the Kachin fell to General Aung San's persuasions. Actually, it was* [prime minister] *U Nu who came and ruined the talks between the Kachin, British, and other hill tribes.*

Note the reified language used to treat ethnic divisions and the common references to the Kachin military prowess, affinity to smaller ethnic nationalities and Burmese treachery. Notably, by making referece to the "raw" past of the Kachin, the quote above incorporates the notion of history as progress and growth. As the next chapter discusses in more detail, this was one of the central concepts introduced by the Christian missions at the start of the 20th century (see also Sadan 2013, 365). The notion of development, of land and its inhabitants, that these two lecture fragments exemplify, is in turn central to the Christian ethno-nationalist imagination today. Before moving on to look how these sentiments have been imagined through different registers of modernity, I want to devote some more space to discussing the daily Christian worship among the Kachin communities with whom I worked. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, these rituals form important sites through which are nourished collective sentiments towards community and nation. They also illustrate the centrality of Christian institutions to the daily life in urban centres like Myitkyina. Understanding the institutional influence of Kachin Christianity is thus crucial for understanding the lived experience of education in this context.

Religious ritual in the everyday life

Though most religious elites today claim that the Kachin society is almost universally Christian, there are reasons to doubt the full extent of active practice. Historically, the reach of colonial-era Christianisation in the Kachin areas has been

contested by Mandy Sadan (2013). In particular, Sadan criticises statistics employed by missionary scholars such as Herman Tegenfeldt (1974), suggesting that "the influence [of the Baptist Church] was localised and by far the majority of Kachin population at the end of the colonial period had not converted to Christianity or had little contact with missionary institutions" (Sadan, 372-373). As noted in Chapter 3, many areas remain outside the limits of reliable data from government censuses or other forms of inquiry. Religious organisations with heavily vested interests such as the KBC almost certainly overstate church membership and lack incentives to subject their data to further scrutiny. Having said that, Christianity was certainly a crucial marker of ethnic identification for all but a handful of Kachin with whom I worked over the course of my fieldwork.[78]

Even of those rare individuals who professed doubts about organised religion (none identified themselves as atheist), their lives were inextricably linked with various Christian institutions. Regardless of individual preference, most social and professional circles were dominated by attested believers. Almost all of my colleagues tended to share in some forms of public Christian rituals, often transgressing denominational boundaries and individual beliefs. In this connection, it is useful to recall Michael Lambek's argument that

> *to undergo a ritual is to commit … both to the specific effects or conditions it produces … and to commit more generally to the relevance of the criteria that the ritual underwrites or reproduces, as well as the means of reproducing them (the nature of marriage, the legitimacy of weddings)* (2010, 45).

Thus, when saying that the contemporary Kachin society is woven together through Christian ritual, I suggest that part of their efficacy derives from their collective nature that both legitimises and produces particular communal identities. For the devout, Christian temporality permeates everything from collective life down to individual existence via recurrent events expressed in a familiar religious idiom. Even those Kachin only loosely associated with Christian worhip spiritually and

78 I recognise here that my fieldwork was still confined to a relatively small group of intellectuals and activists who often had significant links to religious organisations by virtue of their educational and professional careers. While I made significant attempts to gather my data from a cross-denominational perspective, certain bias towards Baptist sources in undeniable. I am hoping that further work by myself and others can expand on this limitation.

intellectually are likely to be drawn into the collective by recurrent ritual life that, as Whitehouse has noted, is "expansionist and inclusive" by definition (2006, 302).

The above should not be taken to imply an unproblematic homogeneity of beliefs. Rather than a single unified Christian canon, there exist multiple Kachin theologies drawing from local traditions and various global influences. These include dominant Catholic and Protestant positions but also more radical ideas of tribal theology. However, most, if not all, converge around particular representations of collective identification through which an affective link to a larger imagined community is constantly maintained and nourished. In this sense it is not only possible to theoretically generalize across multiple Christianities in Kachinland, as Cannell and others have suggested (2006, 7; Howell 2007). Members of different denominations can themselves identify with the larger community of Christians depending on context.

A crucial role in the process of community building is played by religious elites who occupy a central political role in the contemporary Kachin society. However, contra language used by Sadan (2013), I maintain that the idea of the Kachin Christian nation can no longer be understood simply as something created by the elites who then recirculate their ideas in the wider society. Rather, the sites for producing Christian sentiments – often aligned with ethno-nationalist ideologies – are dispersed throughout various layers of the society. The following section looks at several of the more common collective rituals.

Collective rituals and the making of Kachin Christian community

Among the best examples for Lambek's argument is the way that lay-people are given a voice during church services. During Kachin Baptist services, for example, members of the congregation are often encouraged to step up to recount certain personal experiences of faith. These range from material help received from the

congregation, to exalted visions and acts of divine intervention. The following event took place in the summer of 2012, during a regular Sunday service at the Wunpawng Christian Church in Chiang Mai, Thailand. About midway through the sermon, the reverend invited members of the congregation to step up and relate stories that would fit into the general theme of individual's monetary responsibilities towards the church. There was some hustle and bustle in the audience and finally a tall man in his early forties stood up and made his way onto the stage. Somewhat shaky, he grabbed the microphone and said he wanted to tell the assemblage about how he overcame his financial hardships. A common labour migrant who had recently arrived from the Northern Shan State, he had had little luck securing stable employment in Thailand and was struggling to make ends meet for his young family. One night, he decided to pray to *Karai Kasang* [Jehovah] for help and bought a lottery ticket for most of his meagre savings. Come Sunday, he attended church and prayed as hard as he could, promising to keep his tithes. And sure enough, at the next week's drawing his numbers won. Having gained some confidence on the stage by that point, his voice was now trembling from conviction, and praised Jesus for blessing him with his bet. "You should all follow my example", he concluded the slightly drawn-out speech, "pray to *Karai Kasang* and he will reward you!".

While the story was well received by the congregation, I noticed some of my friends sitting next to me flinching at the very end. At the customary lunch Wunpawng Christian Church serves after their Sunday services, I asked one of them how she felt about that man's experience.[79] "It was very good that he shared… But that was not right, was it *sara*?" Confronted with my questioning look she added, "Well, you should not tell like this about a lottery. It is encouraging the people to do similar things and this is not right". "But if it was really an answered prayer?", I asked. "*Alaa* teacher, it cannot be simple like this! That man was wrong. You know, maybe he is just a bit simple, eh *sara*?". After reflecting for a while she concluded, "But I

79 This custom is something I rarely observed inside Myanmar. One explanation that was given to me by some members of the congregation was that it was due to the wealth of the Chiang Mai Kachin church in relation to the size of the congregation. Given the location of the church on the outskirts of the city, this popular gesture would also help attract people to attend services. I also spoke to some poorer labour migrants for whom this was the finest meal of the week, further underlining the point above.

think it was still good that he came up to give encouragement to people through his experience. It uplifts the people. It unites". Several others around the table agreed.

Through answering the call to participate, narrating a chance event in his life through particular Christian idiom, the man was perceived as having served his duty for the congregation in affirming its collective identity in faith. As Lambek notes, while such acts might expose their author to scepticism, this does not necessarily render them any less meaningful. "[T]he point of ritual is to substitute public clarity for private obscurity or ambiguity… Definitive ethical commitments and criteria are thus produced publicly and irrespective of personal doubt" (2010: 46). In less formal settings, the story might have been shrugged off as overzealous. Within the ritualised framework of the service, however, performed individually and through the congregation as a whole, it transcended its everyday meanings. "Congregation", suggests Keane, is "constituted as those before whom [a] profession is witnessed" (2006, 320). The speaker enacts a discourse of belief that is reflected upon by those hearing it. At the same time, "each individual member's coscience itself is subject to the overhearing of others" (ibid). I suggest it is thus, that the public witness performed in the above story was felt to have strengthened the collective sentiment despite doubts of its truthfulness. "I have done this many times for my congregation", Catherine, a Kachin student in her twenties told me as we were discussing this some weeks later in Myitkyina.

> *I feel I need to share my experience to uplift others. When I was still living in Waimaw, you know, our reverend asked us to contribute as much as we can. Sometimes I listen to other people and I hear something and I think, aah!, that person must be right! And every day, I notice something is like they tell us. For example, my friend needed to get a train ticket to Chatthin. He was in a hurry because his sister was sick but he could not get the ticket. He prayed that night and went to the station next morning. They said the train was full and asked him to pay extra money. He did not have very much but he paid that man and he told him to come back after lunch. So my friend trusted him but when he went back there was a different man and he gave him ticket for next week and refuse to give back the money. Later, we learned that this other man had fallen ill because his liver. So we*

knew that this was God's punishment. He can see how crooked the Burman people are so he punish them because we Kachin, we already suffer a lot and we pray. My friend's sister got better. So when my brother shared this story at the church everyone feel encouraged.

From this follows another thread that makes Christian language so central to expressions of national identity. It is that of transcendant hope in the face of uncertainty and collective suffering. Sadan has convincingly argued that part of the reason that Christianity gained in popularity in the post-independence period was the way in which its message resonated with political grievances and threats to self (2013, Chapter 8). While her reading often comes close to reducing all acts of Christian conversion to political reactionism without recognizing their existential or spiritual aspects (e.g. Sadan 2013, 368–379, 397), its valuable insights point to ways in which ethno-nationalist ideologies and Christian morality interacted historically in the contemporary Kachin society. What is notable in Catherine's narrative cited above is how a seemingly random act of official malpractice is couched in ethnic terms while the resolution of the problem is framed in Christian idiom. She is thus evoking both ethnic boundaries and Biblical morality to respond to an act of bureaucratic corruption. This illustrates the everyday dialectic between structural constraints and individual agency in reproducing ethno-nationalist identification and sentiments. While, as I show in more detail below, Baptist clergy have been forced to become increasingly vocal in raising issues of daily politics in sermons, it is equally important to note how, in certain ritual contexts, these problems can also be articulated by lay people to significant effect. I now turn to consider how national imaginary and political grievances are voiced in less formal – but even more frequent – settings of common prayers.

War and community in prayer

The long table had been set for lunch at NHTOI and a dozen students lined benches on either end. As usual, I sat together with the teachers in one of the corners. Nobody had yet touched their food that lay steaming in the midday sun piercing through the woven bamboo blinds. "Seng Nan!" a few of the girls laughed and

pleaded, pointing teasingly at one of their peers. Seng Nan hid her eyes and kept shaking her head, "Roi Ja, *ee*!", trying to indicate her closest neighbour. But the others wouldn't hear of it and so the friendly banter raged on. Seeing that her first attempt had failed to garner popular support, Seng Nan changed her strategy and directed her finger across the table at me. "*Sara! Ahkyu hpyi yo*!" [teacher, please say grace] Her second try bore fruit instantly. "*Sara ee*!" two boys started to clap merrily and several girls hailed along from the other end of the table forgetting entirely their usual shyness in class. I kept shaking my head in turn, smiling (and probably blushing). Seeing that Seng Nan was off the hook and none of the others could be counted on, *Sara* Yawbawm, the head of school, finally shrugged and rose to say grace. In a split instant, laughter fell silent and everyone's head bowed low. Eloquent and melodious, *Sara* Yawbawm would continue for several minutes, first describing us gathered at the table, then making grateful reference to the daily events at the school, on-going war and plight of refugees, presence of a foreign teacher, and the upcoming exams; in short, every greater and smaller thing *Karai Kasang* [Jehovah] had bestowed upon us that particular morning. He also touched briefly on the leaders in Laiza, asking the Lord to guide their decisions and policies.

The following prayer recounted here was given some months later, in November, at another private school in Myitkyina by one of my colleagues. I had been invited to a dinner with the teachers after leading some English classes during the day. Earlier that week, hearsay news of recent *tatmadaw* reinforcements to the Hpakant mining region had started to pour in. By late 2012, almost everyone in my immediate circles had lost faith in the rhetoric of peace negotiations still dominant in the media. Instead, troop movements and reports of incessant clashes formed the central point of reference in daily conversation. A further mention was made to two local youths who had gone missing some days before and were later found to have been detained by the local police on the suspicion of aiding the KIA. Read out in English, the prayer was meant to both include me in the fellowship and to address its urgent message to me as an outsider.

> *Our Heavenly Father, please bless this food and this dinner with our friends. We are your servants and thank you for this gift tonight. We are humble to receive your blessing to our teachers and our students and our families. In the name of Jesus*

Christ, our Saviour, we ask you to protect this school. We ask your blessing for our daily work and give us guidance in teaching our students in advanced ways. For yours is the light of wisdom and the ages. We pray that you help our brothers who are fighting to protect our Kachin land in Hpakant. We pray that you help our IDP people who are suffering today. They have no shelter and they have no food tonight. We share in your grace and ask you to help them too. Heavenly Father, please bless them all. We pray that you protect our innocent brothers who suffer in prison. We pray that you help to release them for they are your servants. Help them as you helped your servant Joseph who was also held prisoner. Heavenly Father, help us do better in your works. We are blind without your guiding light. Please bless this food, in Jesus' name, Amen! (Bawk San, Myitkyina, 14 November 2012)

The saying of grace before meals is among the most quotidian Christian rituals. With very few exceptions, among the Kachin with whom I worked, a collective grace preceded every single meal. Some more zealous theology students would even insist on saying one when served a cup of tea. "For our Kachin people, grace is like chilli, we cannot take food without it!", my Jinghpaw teacher liked to joke. More often than not, eating also tends to be a shared enterprise. Thus, shared prayer pervades daily life more than any other collective ritual. While the words are spoken unto God and concern much by way of spirit and piety, the breadth of grace also finds referents in the world of work, community, and politics.

The political function of prayer has been well studied in both theological and social science literature. Analysing prayers found in the Second Book of Maccabees, for example, Chris De Wet has shown how it served to promote cohesion between Palestinian and diaspora Jews, and promoted anti-Hellenic sentiments (2009), much like it has among the Kachin tribes of different regional origin (see Hanson's quote in the following chapter). Common prayers are also important sites of agency, dissipating, as it were, the power of the utterance from the domain of elites (the pulpit) to more egalitarian settings. This is particularly important in the Kachin Baptist tradition that, at least in theory, prioritises the autonomy of churches, congregations, and individual believers. To be sure, there still exist significant hierarchies between religious offices and the lay people. As part of their weekly

routine, for example, Baptist reverends would visit homes to hold family services, part of which included giving instructions on how and when to say prayers. Yet while these meetings would shape the idiom of prayers and maintain their weekly rhythm, there remains considerable space for improvisation in less formal settings. Rather than *repetition*, prayer in the contemporary Kachin society is better understood as (*re*)*production* of one's relationship to the transcendental that also animates the communal aspects of social existence. By referring to both actual places and participants, as well as distant times and words long spoken, prayer bridges "the ontological gap between visible and invisible worlds", thereby giving actuality to both (Keane 2006, 312).

As the first example illustrates, there also exists a strong element of performance in the act. As the Tswana Christians in Jean and John Comaroff who, using elaborate oratorical skills not only sought "to sway God with many words", but constructed experience and tangible links between people and the world (1991, 226), the Kachin prayers constitute crucial sites for relating experiential social realities through the transcendental. Though the youth would often take the matter with certain playfulness, a proper grace at a Kachin meal needs to be delivered eloquently and with social tact. The speaker must equally show their devoutness in faith as well as their compassion towards the collective in its daily toils. It is thus that prayers draw together the religious and the profane life of the community, animating both through its supreme referent, and reproducing collective affinities of the faithful.

In the Kachin schools at which I worked throughout my fieldwork, mealtime prayers formed but one element in the daily rhythm of religious rituals. At the NHTOI English Centre, for example, students would collectively organise devotion services early in the morning and before bedtime. Those living on the campus were expected to take part, both by their fellow students and by the school staff, even though, as I showed in Chapter 2, the attitudes towards religion were actually more complex. Considerable peer pressure applied to the negligent few who refused to get up in time to file through the early morning chill to pray by the candlelight. These regular devotions were led by students and teachers, and constituted a further level of building and confirming collective ethnic identification. Everyone would visit one of the nearby churches on Sundays. Tellingly, it was one of the rare

occasions resident boarders were allowed to leave the campus, further underlining the importance attributed to collective religious devotion by the school leaders.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by introducing the divergent religious landscapes of contemporary Kachin State, and providing several examples of how contests over religious symbols have manifested in the public sphere. These tensions have a strong ethno-nationalist dimension, transcending both particular symbols and denominational boundaries. In local Kachin perceptions, they are necessarily imbued with references to historical time and struggles over self-determination and self-preservation in the secular political sphere. Thus, interpretations of these events, and the emotional responses they entail, form part of a larger historical consciousness of political marginalisation.

This is not to downplay the spiritual and existential aspects of Christian identities. One of my primary aims in this chapter has been to provide ethnographic evidence of the centrality of Christian beliefs and practices in the lives of the people and organisations with whom I worked. Collective devotional rituals were a common observance in most of the schools with which I engaged through my fieldwork, and I have sought to communicate their relevance through several examples. They involved a complex making of individuals and communities in existential terms into which the political is embedded. As such, belonging to a Christian polity, as well as notions of personal commitment and sacrifice, deeply informed the practice of many school leaders and activists whose work I portray in this thesis.

It would be difficult to overstate the lasting power of Christian organisations in the daily politics of Kachinland. Today, they command historical authority and considerable resources that can be tapped for both religious and secular aims. As Bandak and Jorgensen remind us, Christianity is hardly "restricted to existential sentiments" alone but is equally geared into "political and material realities" in local life worlds (2012, 452). The final quote by Maran La Raw below illustrates how the current political tensions allow organisations like the KBC to mobilise significant popular support on this basis. "In 2013, as a KIO delegation made its way to Myitkyina to explore the possibility of a ceasefire with concomitant political reform,

the government schemed for quick consent by intimidation. The local Kachin Baptist churches had a different idea and brought out more than twelve thousand people in short order to intimidate the government instead" (Maran La Raw, 2014: 477). Part of this lasting authority owes to the historical development of Christianity in the Kachin areas that posited the clergy at the moral and intellectual apex of the society. As the next chapter will argue in more detail, their symbolic control over literacy and early schooling enabled the Christian organisations to regulate not only adherence to religious practices, but also self- ascriptive content of what is means to be a Kachin in a modernising world.

CHAPTER VII Christian Visions of National Development

> *Oh Jesus Christ! … Give us some dreams to be realised, that we would build a city of skyscrapers and condominiums at N'hkai Bum, along side the Namkwe Kha. It may be worth $-30 million US to accommodate one hundred thousand people in twenty thousand units but it is needed. We would develop the city with short-range airstrip and nylon-tar road to connect with Myitkyina. Utility vans would run on the road. We would equip this city with a chapel and a city hall at the central square. The city would be supplied with 1000 mega watts electricity from Mali Dabak and Chyighkrang Kha. There would be two hundred bed hospital, to treat the sick patients. Our desire would be to see secondary schools to teach English and Science subjects to all our students. The City would be christened the "New Jerusalem" and its centre square would be graced with beautiful orchids from snow cap areas. This New Jerusalem would be quite larger than Hebron, which is known as the birth place of Abraham. Our hope and prayers would be to develop it to reflect the Holy City of our God. It would be a figurative city like Zion for the Kachins.*
>
> (Tertius Doi, no date)

> *Kachin insistence on their faith as a key determinant of their modernity is now one of the main ideological distinctions between the Kachin of Burma, the Singpho of Assam and the Jingpo of China.*
>
> (Sadan, 2013: 360)

Christian organisations occupy a central role in the contemporary Kachin society and claim a long-standing role in developing schooling and literacy. Christian visions of national development also constitute some of the most potent discourses

of Kachin modernity.[80] Historical evidence provided in the first half of this chapter suggests that the missionary enterprise in the Kachin areas was deeply concerned with the social development of converted populations since its earliest beginnings. It also propagated its own modalities of national imaginary. Discussions around these efforts were embedded in the larger evangelical discourse, and remain a lasting legacy of Kachin Christian organisations that later appropriated them. Insofar as the wide majority of educators studied in this work define themselves as Christians, and insofar as their initiatives are closely linked with the dominant religious organisations in the Kachin State, these historical trajectories remain highly topical today. Thinking back to Bénéï's (2008) notion of schools always existing in dialogue with the society, this dialogue was commonly held on religious grounds, both literally and metaphorically. In the activist circles I worked in, moral horizons and professional aims were commonly expressed in the Christian idiom. Biblical references were used to interpret daily events and political developments. Christian rituals punctuated both organisational and personal routines. Visions of national development that animated the efforts to build alternative forms of schooling took as their central point of reference a unified society of Kachin Christians.

A historical reading of publications by the early Christian missionaries working in the Kachin Hills reveals a passionate concern with what they pictured as national progress. On one level, their interventions were certainly tied to the religious paradigm in which the foreign missionaries worked. The later not only saw themselves as modernizing agents but also actively sought to maximise the developmental impact of the mission outside the sphere of faith, strictly speaking. While Leach laments the "anti-British" sentiment of American Baptist Mission, he also notes that the colonial government increasingly addressed its "uplift campaigns" to Kachin church leaders over traditional chiefs (1947, 630). Missions were seen as credible – if often problematic – partners, both by colonial authorities and post-independence governments. This appears to have been true up until General Ne Win's reforms in the 1960s that forced all foreign mission staff to leave

80 As I have already shown, this in no way implies that the Christian narratives of modernity are the only ones available. Perhaps the most influential alternatives come from the fast growing NGO sector, as well as businesses both local and foreign. However, as enthographic examples presented throughout this thesis suggest, the latter are often interwoven with Christian cosmologies.

the country.

The problematic of missionary contact has been observed by anthropologists working in other colonial contexts. For example, Rutherford traces comparable agendas among the Dutch Protestant missionaries working in early 20th century Indonesia (2006). One insight emerging from his work is that the local appropriation of missionary discourse can diverge significantly from their original purposes. In this context, the present analysis asks how ideas of modernity came to be appropriated by the 'indigenised' Christian organisations and the wider Kachin society. While the initial efforts to 'modernise' the life of Kachin villages were carried out unilaterally by the mission, the changing geopolitical and economic climate brought increasing numbers of villages to petition for the churches to provide benefits such as education (see Leach 1947, 629; Tegenfeldt 1974, 164, 313). The legitimacy of the clergy thus gradually came to depend on their ability to act in a role of leadership in delivering certain social services, in addition to their evangelic aims and pastoral care. Equally important in comparative perspective is the particular historical trajectory taken by Kachin ethno-ntionlist movements through the 20th century.

One function of missionary writings as *historical* source is that their representations of Kachin society have gained wide circulation and popularity within its intellectual circles. As noted in the introduction, secular scholarship has tended to discredit the writings of missionaries by virtue of their often arrogant ethnocentricity and Biblical language (Robbins & Engelke 2010; Howell 2007; Cannell 2006). Their content passes for mere uncritical opinion, biased by their unapologetically evangelistic aims. Leach, for example, summarily dismisses even Herman Tegenfeldt's work (1974) as "blinkered devotion", equating it to evangelical magazines published in 1800 (Leach 1975; for a more favourable view of Leach's contemporary see Cady 1975). Yet up until Sadan's recent work (2013, 369–372), which offers a more nuanced critique, the importance of these writings seems to have been overlooked in one important regard. Namely the extent to which the missionary scholarship, as the single widely accessible English language source to the students of theological seminaries in Myanmar or to those select few enrolling abroad, has since been accepted and

appropriated by the very communities they purportedly portrayed.[81] This is equally true for the local notions of morality – a crucial dimension in Michael Herzfeld's (1997) reading of nationalism mentioned in the previous chapter – as it is for the historical memory. For example, uneasiness in the face of what is felt to be a 'primitive and wild' past forms an important element in the contemporary national sentiments while simultaneously legitimizing the authority of religious elites.

While the primary intent of Western missionaries was spiritual conversion, the institutions they founded would affect the development of the contemporary *Jinghpaw Wunpawng* nationalism, particularly in the decades following the 1960s. Not only were novel ideas about national belonging and geopolitics brought along with the Scriptures, but also standardisation of the Jinghpaw grammar and associated technologies like the printing press. These shifts worked to produce new forms of ethno-nationalist identification and political capital (B. Anderson 2006; E. Gellner 2006). From that basis emerged a class of indigenous elites, whose authority rested neither in entirely traditional forms of power, nor the force of arms brought by conflicts since World War II. These Christian elites advocated their own vision of national development. Part of their success lies in the way they were able to navigate the changing social landscape of new Christian morals and colonial encroachment while still retaining legitimate claim to indigenous traditions.

To sum, the central aim of this chapter is thus to understand the historical emergence of the Kachin Christian discourse of modernity that animated the early missionary encounter and was later appropriated by the local religious elites. To that end, I am drawing on Baptist missionary publications and other sources contemporaneous with the early formative period of Christianisation. To illustrate how these early visions have been expressed in more contemporary discourse on modernity in the Kachin ethno-nationalist register, the final part of the chapter analyses visual artwork from several Christian journals published in the 1990s. These images depict visions of national development as well as perceived tensions

81 Theological libraries often carry either original publications of American Baptist Mission Press or their photocopied reproductions. Southeast Asian publishing houses like the White Lotus Press have also issued reprints of several important missionary publications on the Kachin. The latter are widely available to Kachin expatriate communities living in Thailand and elsewhere and I have observed numerous copies on bookshelves in Myitkyina and Mai Ja Yang.

arising from rapid social change. Unless stated otherwise, the chapter concentrates on the legacies of the American Baptist mission and the KBC.[82]

"Their fathers were brigands": Early mission and modernity in the Kachin Hills

Ever since Max Weber's classic thesis on the role of Protestantism in economic development (2001 [1904]), there has been a growing body of literature on the Christian organisations as influential development actors in colonial (Byam 1997; Gallego and Woodberry 2010; Håkansson 1998; Savage 1997; Latukefu 1967; Ajayi 1965) and post-colonial (Ngo 2010; Sherman 1997) contexts. One common point this variegated corpus outlines is the fact that neither the worldviews nor the institutions that the Christian missions introduced were limited in their impact to their evangelical aims. The context-specific outcomes of these efforts remained necessarily dialectical in that they were equally shaped by the plans of missionaries and the local demands and judgements. Likewise, in forcing the missionaries to negotiate for ever greater territorial access and popular legitimacy, early Kachin perceptions did much to shape the subsequent social and political role of Christian organisations (see Sadan 2013, 374–379; Tegenfeldt 1974).

Arguably the single most important role in early Kachin Baptist church growth was played by the mission school. Like Weber before them, anthropologists building on his early insights classically argued that the staying power of world religions across different societies was to be found in the "greater conceptual generalisation, tighter formal integration, and a more explicit sense of doctrine" than those of traditional religious practices (Geertz 1973, 175).[83] However, the powerful discursive potential of the Biblical doctrine could only be communicated via institutions commanding

82 This is due to most of my data, both historical and ethnographic, being based on the Baptist sources. I acknowledge that developments on the Catholic and other denominational contexts might have differed somewhat and that further research is needed on the topic.

83 I have already noted on Asad's critique of Geertzian conceptualization of religion as a category (1993). My discussion here focuses more on the institutional and technological power of Christian organisations. Asad subscribes to a similar line of argument following Skovgaard-Petersen and Schulze in his discussion on the modernizing state and Islam (2003, 225).

sufficient expertise, popular legitimacy, and territorial reach. As Robert Hefner points out, the advantage dominant world religions have over existing alternatives is ultimately premised upon their ability to create and maintain a "linkage of … transcendental imperatives to institutions for the propagation and control of religious knowledge and identity over time and space" (Hefner 1993, 19). As for the German Protestant Rhenish mission working among the Toba Batak in Sumatra (Chandler et al 1987) or the American Baptists among the Karen in south-eastern Burma (Keyes 1977, 21), for the early Baptists in the Kachin Hills the propagation and control of religious knowledge was primarily served by the mission school. Hence the words of Rev. Ola Hanson that the latter had always constituted missionaries' "strongest evangelic agency" (cited in Tegenfeldt, 1974: 151).

Among the Kachin tribes, as elsewhere across colonial Southeast Asia, the missionary encounter introduced novel institutions for disseminating, standardizing, and auditing religious knowledge and practices. Simultaneously, they were also serving secular aims. An important feature of these institutions was that they were, from the outset, supra-local in outlook and character. The foreign missionaries among the Kachin had started their work in a context where the pre-existing linguistic and kinship ties bound the fragmented communities into vast networks of reciprocal relations. To a significant extent, these ties set the boundaries for evangelisation, both in terms of communicability and cooperation. For example, Rev. Ola Hanson reported to the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* of 1908 on his travels to the Singhpos of Assam where he was delighted to find that he could converse with them at ease. "It appears to me that our field has been vastly enlarged during the last three months. The language of the Assam Singhpos is, for all practical purposes, the same as that of the Kachins of Burma, and our books, I am sure, can be used to advantage" (Hanson 1908). It was within these linguistic and cultural boundaries, whose extent was subject to much debate and exploration, that the individual missions started building local alliances that would eventually grow into self-sustaining 'indigenised' organisations like the KBC.

As noted in the Introduction, the areas inhabited by the Kachin tribes remained outside the colonial dominion until relatively late through the British occupation of Burma. When, by the 1930s, the regime did finally establish itself in the northeastern

Frontier Areas, its concerns were mainly economic, regarding the collection of taxes and establishment of law and order to protect the plains-dwellers and the passing trade. These aims were largely pursued through what Leach called "administrative 'tidiness'", often far removed from the everyday realities of the local populace (1947: 582-583). Colonial Burma itself had been conceived as a buffer state of British India, and the tribal societies of inaccessible and rebellious northern highlands were thus of little direct concern to the British. In developing the Frontier Areas, under which was counted the landmass of contemporary Kachin State, the main concern of early British imperial administrators was to avoid disturbing the economic infrastructural developments already under way in Assam and to refrain from destabilizing provocations towards China (Sadan 2013, 164–165).

From their meagre beginnings, the position of Christian missions was almost diametrically opposite. While the colonial administration largely treated the local Kachin populace as mere means, the missionaries took them as an end in and of themselves. They had realised early on that the animist tribes were far more malleable to their message of salvation than the Theravada Buddhist lowlanders. Missionaries also reasoned that conversion sustainable of church growth required profound changes in the traditional ways of life. As Jean and John Comaroff have noted in the context of British colonial Africa, the evangelical pedagogical apparatus "aimed at the systematic, moral reconstruction of the person in a world in which individuals were increasingly viewed as capable of being formed and reformed by social institutions" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997, 233). This reshaping of the individual in pursuit of evangelical aims allowed the American Baptist missionaries to envision a more or less complete social transformation in the spheres of religion, morality, health and education that would affect the Kachin society as a whole. Needless to say, the aims of the mission, however holistic, should not be taken to be their actual outcomes. In reference to conversion's effects on identity, for example, Hefner has famously noted that it is less a "complete transformation" of self than a "new locus of self-identification" (1993, 17). I have already quoted Rutherford's study (2006) as one example of selective appropriation of evangelical message and material by the Biak. As I will show below, American Baptists and their colleagues among the Kachin met considerable resistance to their 'civilizing' mission. However,

that this was so does not refute the existence certain pervasive ideologies or their lasting legacy in contemporary discourse of religious nationalism.

In the interests of space, I refrain from discussing here the first and primary goal of the mission, that is, evangelisation. Its history on the Baptist front has been recorded by Herman Tegenfeldt, who covers the period until the late 1960s by which time the Kachin Baptist Convention had become entirely independent from its parent organisation in the US (Tegenfeldt 1974; see also Sword 1954; for a Baptist account on wider Burma see Maung Shwe Wa 1963). I would, however, like to touch upon two other spheres that the missionaries sought to influence: popular morality and socio-economic welfare.

The first of these was, of course, tightly related to the evangelical aims. Writes missionary Geis, "There is nothing in this [*nat jaw*] religion which has the least moral power over man, nothing to make him better; but on the contrary, it has a most degrading influence, for like the spirits they propitiate, they lie, plunder and kill" (1902, 174). What the missionaries believed to be innate passions of an entire race were seen to be at odds with the project of building a sustainable Christian community. While notable differences remained between Catholic and Protestant missions (such as that concerning the prohibition on alcoholic beverages), there appeared to be a common obsession with a sort of moral hygiene, including monogamous family life and law-abiding professions.

In the early days of Christian conversion – a chief rite-of-passage into the new moral order – the most common technique was the collective burning of household's *nat* altars. The missionaries readily orchestrated these as public displays, complete with hymns, prayers and public questioning of candidates (Tegenfeldt 1974, 126, 395). However, this was seen as merely the first step on the way to becoming true Christians. Deeply concerned over the integrity of the fledgling community, missionaries remained constantly alert to all forms of moral or ideological deviance. It was commonly believed that families or even whole villages would revert back to animism if left to their own devices or under the influence of pagan kinsmen. As Geis notes in his annual report for *The Baptist Missionary Journal* of 1904, of the sixty-nine Kachin converts in the Myitkyina area, "regeneration is not sanctification; some

of these babes in Christ have made slow growth in grace, while others showed by their lives that they were not of us, and therefore turned again to their former way of living" (1904, 376). A year earlier, Hanson laments how "those who ought to be 'teachers' and ensamples [sic], often stand in need of the greatest care, and give the most trouble" (1903, 349). In a rare account of church punishment, W.H. Roberts describes having to publicly whip a confessed but repeated sinner at his school by the decision of a committee of indigenous Christian elders. The offender was then sentenced to hard labour and penitence for five weeks before being restored and becoming one of the most able preachers and a personal assistant to Hanson (Roberts 1901, 668–669).[84]

The high standards established for Baptism, gauged through a complex set of spiritual and moral markers for personal worth, illustrate the extent of missionaries' attempted intervention to social life of the converts. Evidence thereof can be found as early as 1882 when, upon Roberts' return from America, a group of Kachin from Bumwa village expressed their willingness to be baptised. Missionary Cronkhite, who accompanied Roberts to the site, notes that two out of nine were seen as unfit after a thorough questioning and taken back to join the Bhamo mission school (cited in Tegenfeldt 1974, 104). While in this instance the reason was the lack of understanding of the Gospels, the most common measure of successful conversion was moral conduct, particularly abstinence. Even in the period following the Second World War, Tegenfeldt records pastors expressing their concern for "unworthy motives" behind superficially spiritual commitments (ibid.). On the level of individual and collective morals, the missionaries thus sought to intervene in incomparably greater extent than the colonial state.

The third major factor of early mission work among the Kachin concerned social aims, such as primary education, vocational training, healthcare and sanitation, and even gender equality. Historical sources from the American Baptist front suggest that missionaries were often concerned with improving the material conditions of

84 In relation to Robert's passage, it is interesting to note how it illustrates a complex interplay of missionary practices with local cultural norms. The reverend readily admits having been guided in his choice of disciplinary action by an elder member of the localcongragation. In reference to the central theme of this thesis, it shows how local agents influenced and appropriated institutional practices in the earliest days of the mission.

life for the populations for whom they laboured. For example, Tegenfeldt notes how, apart from a "strong devotional emphasis", Geis's influence in the Bhamo Bible School was characterised both by "an interest in the whole life of a village, including the provision of good drinking water and mosquito control" (1974: 175). In addition to Biblical subjects, the early curriculum consisted of basics in agriculture, healthcare and pedagogy (ibid., 176), all of which were seen as beneficial for raising local economic opportunities and social welfare. Speaking of the Bible Churchman's Missionary Society, even Edmund Leach notes that "whatever may be thought of their Bible punching methods of evangelism, one can have nothing but admiration for their efforts in the medical field" (1947: 627). To be sure, attempts at achieving what the Western missionaries saw as improvement might not always have been such for the target population. But it is safe to say that their early efforts in the Kachin Hills surpassed strictly evangelical concerns. Moreover, missionary concerns for social development were not unilateral. I have already shown that there was considerable demand by the local communities for the missionaries to provide services such as education (see also Sadan 2013, 374). It would thus be misleading to treat the expansion of mission schools and related evangelical institutions as a process entirely driven by foreign agents. Like most events related to colonial expansion into the Kachin areas, it was subject to mutual negotiation, shaped by efforts and expectations of different actors.

The three images below, printed in the 1906 and 1902 editions of the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* respectively, further illustrate the transformative goals the American missionaries set for themselves in the Kachin Hills and Nagaland. The accompanying text of the first set fleshes out for their Western readership the gritty details of the two photographs. Tellingly, it makes reference to the mission school as the central institution of the desired reforms.

> *What fruitage are these schools now growing? … They are continuing to transform races like the Kachins, a tribe* [sic] *of mountaineers on the Chinese border, among whom Rev. W. H. Roberts is pioneering. Their fathers were brigands and held up every passing caravan. One photograph shows this raw Kachin material, with banged hair, silver neck-rings, flannel ear draperies, innumerable blackened bamboo hoops at the waist in place of a belt, abbreviated skirts and generally heathenish*

aspect. The other shows the material transformed and the mission school at Bhamo where the process goes on (Baptist Missionary Magazine 1906: 178).

Illustration 10
"Wild Kachins, Burma" (Baptist Missionary Magazine 1906, 179)

Illustration 11
"Kachin School, Bhamo, Burma" (Baptist Missionary Magazine 1906, 178)

While also aimed at raising donations for overseas mission work, the underlying rhetoric in such articles is nonetheless significant for the local context. It conveys the concern that the missionaries held for continuous 'betterment' of the communities with whom they worked, imagined on a continuum of evolutionary Christian growth. Notable discursive similarities exist, for example, with the writings of Dutch

Protestant reformers from the same period who, like pastor Ottho Gerhard Heldring described by Rutherford, were committed to social change both in Europe and the colonies (see 2006, 244-246). Characteristically for the period that believed in the capacity of modern institutions to shape individuals and races – not least through labour – the indigenous communities are commonly referred to as an almost inanimate "material" to be moulded through care (a metaphor still very much present in the parlance of Kachin clergy and lay people alike). Apparent is also the extent to which the missionaries' concern went far beyond the strictly spiritual advancement. Not only has the new "material" been dressed in the modernised garb of Lower Burma, their "heathenish" drums exchanged for hymnals, but their putative profession as brigands is being actively turned into one worthy of a Christian citizen (of what precisely this new profession would consist the faraway readership was left to envision for themselves).

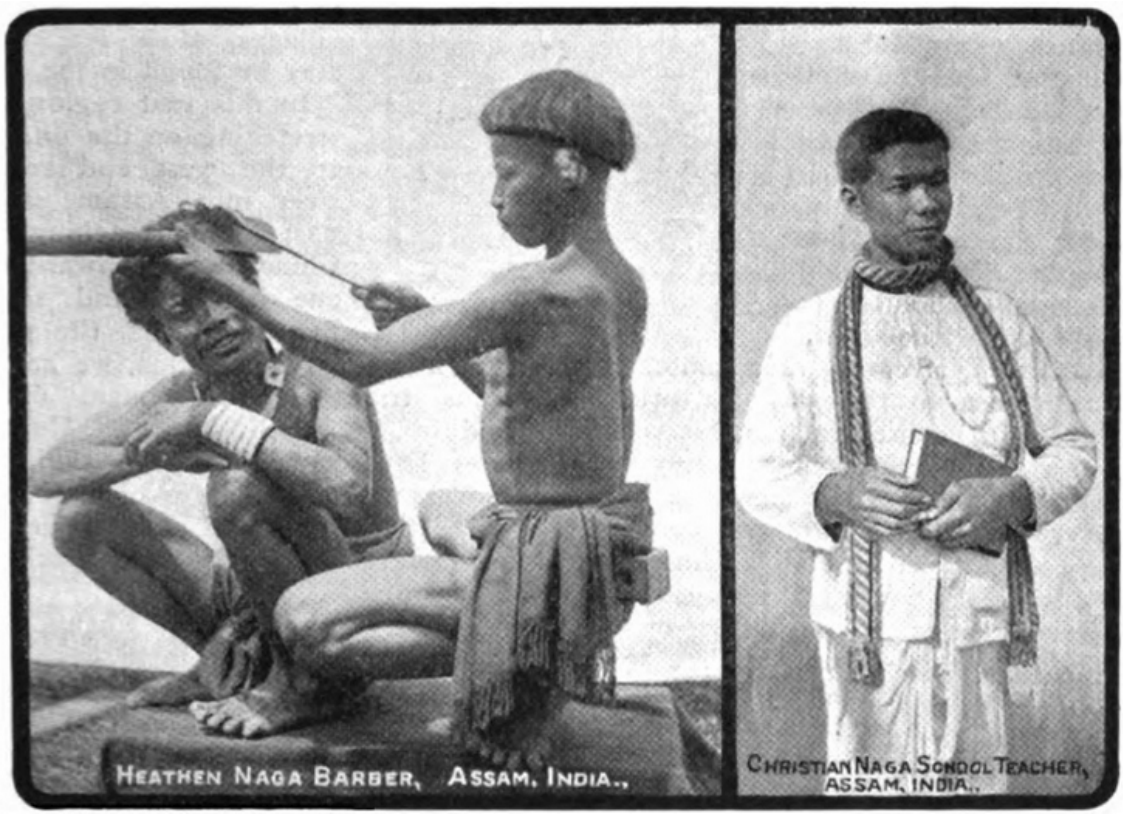


Illustration 12
"The missionaries among the hill tribes expect the gospel to produce such changes as are exhibited in this illustration – savage heathen transformed into preachers of righteousness. Photo by Rev. S.A. Perrine" (Baptist Missionary Magazine 1902, 173)

The importance of such records extends beyond interest in the world-views of foreign mission staff. It must be borne in mind that the institutions they created, particularly that of Christian leadership [*ningbaw*], were soon appropriated by local religious elites whose numbers were growing steadily. While at the turn of the century only ten Baptist pastors were working in the Kachin areas, by 1940 this number had grown to seventy-two (for full annual statistics see Tegenfeldt 1974, table 10). To this must be added the uncounted number of lay men and women who were responsible for most of the witness on a daily basis (ibid., 455).[85] The novel registers for thinking of modernity, as well as the changing national imaginary introduced by the mission, were thus circulated in an ever expanding territorial expanse that far superseded the foreign-staffed mission compounds. As already noted, neither the growth of Christian institutions nor the internalisation of novel ideas is seldom a linear process in inter-cultural contexts (Hefner 1993). However, contemporary spread and influence of Kachin Christian organisations suggests that significant influence on local norms and customs *was* exerted by the missionary encounter, and much of it appropriated by the changing social order. The notion of clerical privilege over ordinary citizens, for example, was directly instrumental to maintaining the leadership role of Kachin Christian elites, and constituted a radical break with the former authority of *jaiwas* and *dumsas*.[86] While Leach suggests that conversion allowed Kachin elites to forego material and ritual obligations towards the community (1947, 634), it must also be remembered that, within the emerging Christian cosmology, the new religious elites were more responsible for the betterment of society than lay people.

Historical imaginaries constitute another arena where the lasting legacy of missionary institutions is readily apparent today. The published writings of missionary scholars such as Ola Hanson and Herman Tegenfeldt exerted far bigger influence on successive generations of Kachin intellectuals than, say, that of the

85 As already noted, Tegenfeldt's statistics have come under much needed scrutiny in recent years, most notably in the work of Sadan (2013). However, while he likely overstated the extent of mass conversion among the Baptists, church registers on clerical membership offer more trustworthy data.

86 Traditional *nat jaw* religious offices (see Leach 1954, 190).

relatively unknown (and controversial) Edmund Leach.[87] Apart from certain elite circles involved in local ethnological research, such as the contributors to the *Wunpawng Sawk Dinglik Lik-Laika* or the *Kachin Research Journal*, the main non-Kachin sources of information about the colonial past are constituted by the early clerical writings.[88] For example, a common answer to my questions on Kachin history elicited either mythological narratives or those directly lifted from the missionary texts. For the majority of Kachin elites I conversed with on these topics, historical time was primarily anchored in two events, one mythical, another dated.

First of these was the loss of writing through the *shanhpyi laika* or the animal-hide book, that Scott has employed in his popular theory of state evasion (2010). Although Sadan has largely dismissed his claims on historical grounds (or lack thereof), the idea of the Lost Book exists as one of the foundational myths for the contemporary Kachin (2013, 227, see also fn. 135). In Baptist circles, it is commonly employed as an apologetic explanation for *nat jaw* practices in the pre-Christian Kachin society. A passionate account of the events leading to the loss of writing was recounted to me by Sr. Rev. La Ja, one of the oldest Baptist clergymen in Myitkyina.

> *According to the legend, our forefather came out from ...* Ka-ang ginra. *It means the Middle Place of the World. ... We believe that in the ancient times, we were inhabitants of the Middle East. But when – I forget the era – Muslim Muhammad … passed away, his army* [began to] *evangelise their message and their Quran Bible. 'Will you take this one or this one?' If you're the chief of the country then you must say, 'I will take the Quran'. 'That means you are friendly. We will never attack you!' … At that time, they occupied Jerusalem temple that the Israelite peoples loved very much... Then, according to our Kachin forefathers' legend, they took the parchment Bible… from that temple. On the way they are very hungry* [and so] *they ate it! So from that time we had no letters. We forget all our history, our beginnings, except only by the word of mouth. At that time, we*

87 It is interesting to note that when Maran La Raw was appointed as the "first Kachin State research anthropologist" in 1960, his foremost mission was testing out Leach's theories as an indigenous scholar – a project sadly disrupted by the onset of the revolution that forced him to exile in the US (Maran La Raw 2007, 33)

88 An important exception to this would be Chinese language sources (for bibliographic references see Wang 1997).

migrated into Burma and we are animists. We worship nats, *evil spirits. All Kachins are animist. When we worship* nats *we don't bow down. We just sit down and say 'You and I' with* nats. *And then we forget God and all kinds of things. We have no faith in God and we are just living for... how many centuries! No record at all! In such time, I believe that our God from heaven was looking down at* [those] *who were searching for him. And he saw that we Kachins* [were] *longing* [for] *our God in our land. And at that time, the American Baptist missionary, his name is Eugenio Kincaid, came…*

The first half of this history is recounted in different variations. The above version cites Jerusalem as the original site from whence the forefathers set out on the fateful journey wherein written language was lost. There are several alternative passages that can fill that role, most taking place closer to Kachinland. Invariably, however, this acts as one of the foundational episodes in the Kachin historical imagination, serving to legitimize the emergence of Christian institutions in the Kachin society. The second pivotal point in the popular historical imaginary is the arrival of foreign missionaries led by Eugenio Kincaid, the first American Baptist to have entered the Kachin areas in the 1830s. Most narratives then progress from Reverends Kincaid to Geis, Roberts, Sword and eventually Hanson and his completion, in 1926, of the Jinghpaw translation of the Bible.

It is worth pointing out some useful comparisons and differences with the account on Peruvian Piro converts described by Peter Gow (2006). Like the Kachin, the Piro in Gow's ethnography have narrativized the initial contacts with the Summer Institute of Linguistics as a pivotal point in their collective history. It marks the beginning of "civilized" life for the Piro, having emancipated them from debt service to the haciendas and aquiring their own land titles, villages, and schools (ibid. 213). At the same time the memory of conversion as an event appears curiously missing from Piro historical consciousness. The reason, Gow suggests, is that for the Piro, traditional cosmology was not conceptualized as a "parallel religion" to Christianity. What was seen as inevitable transition was thus never anchored in the missionary conversion as an event but took place within a longer eternity already created by God (ibid. 237).

Kachin narratives resonate with Piro's in their insistence of the "civilizing" influence of conversion. As I have noted, this can take the common form of nature/culture dichotomy that portrays the Kachin forebears as fierce but 'uncivilized' warriors. However, there is also a notion of liberation from the ritual serfdom to the *nats.* The Piro perceived their 'civilizing' escape from the worldly power of the hacienda owners. Early Kachin converts were freed from the obligation of appeasing the spirits and could focus on 'worthier' Christian pursuits instead. In missionary eyes, the latter were very much modern pursuits (see below). It is useful to put this shift in its colonial context. Leach insists that the biggest institutional change brought by the British regime was its judicial reform over Kachin customary law (1947, 598-601). Traditionally, the disputing parties had a choice whether or not to seek an arbiter. The British administration sought to make its legal procedure compulsory in all cases. It stipulated standardized monetary fines in place of former ritual obligations and gave the agents of colonial administration the central role. In this colonial order of things, the wider Kachin society and its ritual specialists would gradually become secondary.[89] In the areas where colonial authority held sway, the secular legal framework liberated subjects – particularly Christian chiefs – from certain ritual obligations to the wider community (ibid. 634). In Christianized communities, the act of accepting the new faith promised liberation from the *nats* by placing the individual, shepherded by the church, in the care of single Karai Kasang.

However, the Kachin case differs markedly from Piro's in that conversion forms a central trope in contemporary re-tellings of history. As several examples in this thesis suggest, conversion among the Kachin is dwelt upon quite regularly. In Gow's terms, missionary contact and the spiritual turning certainly constitute a "historical event" (as opposed to mere "action") (2006, 237). In other words, it is experienced as a discontinuity, a shift from one type of collective existence to another, even if many roots of pre-Christian customs were never fully severed. As Olivia Harris notes in her study of Bolivian Laymi, discontinuity produced by conversion – whether collective or individual – is not something that is simply

89 Leach insists that this made possible the settlement of disputes between Christians and orthodox nat worshipers that, in the traditional customary law, had been impossible. From the customary standpoint, however, no cases had been "properly settled for the past 50 years" (1947, 601).

accepted or forgotten once it has come to pass (2006). For the newly converted, it brings an acute existential dilemma and always a threat of reversion – something early missionaries were painfully aware of as I will show below. Even after several generations the threat of "sin" and "backsliding" remain (2006, 72). In contemporary Kachin modernity, the latter are tightly interwoven with social concerns such as youth addiction, where the young are seen as turning away not only from the church but also Kachin languages and traditions.

The historical consciousness of discontinuity does not preclude collective predestination that paves way for the linear time of modernity. Though those Kachin Christians with whom I worked acknowledged their pre-Christian past, the legend cited above suggests an even earlier period where the collective body stood closer to God in its knowledge of the written word. There is a contemporary Kachin understanding that, although their forefathers were not Christian, they already knew of Karai Kasang. The latter occupied a special place in the pantheon of *nats* by its inexplicable birth and transcendent distance. Missionary Hanson, who collected significant ethnological data on early Kachin mythology, summarizes these beliefs thus.

> *The Supreme One never had a human birth and how he came into existence no one can tell. Still the Creator* (Hpan wa Ningsan), *the Omniscient One* (Chye wa Ningchyan), *the One Higher than the Clouds, (*Sumwi Sumdam*), ... and the Supreme One* (N-gawn Karai Kasang), *are one and the same. It is true that a Kachin is hopelessly lost when attempting to explain how this one being could be born, and still be above everything that was born, and at the same time claim that he never had a mother. But we only need remember that more intelligent races have had similar difficulties in connection with their particular forms of theology. All a Kachin really claims to know is that there is someone higher and greater than the* nats. *Further than this we can know nothing about him. No altars are raised in his honor, no sacrifices are ever made to propitiate him, no one can know his abode or divine his will. He is immortal, omniscient, omnipotent and omni-present, and this is never affirmed of the* nats. (1913, 168)

Contemporary Kachin believe that their forebears were aware of the existence of God just not God's true identity – something that required privileged knowledge. More importantly, God knew the Kachin.[90] As the legend above suggests, God was seeking for those lost. Although the loss of writing is attributed to the folly of humans, the agency behind conversion is fundamentally attributed to the deity. Seldom is the presence of early missionaries explained through colonial expansion or other, worldly, factors. While the personal willpower of individuals such as the Roberts and the Hansons is often commended, the ultimate cause for their perseverance is divine grace. Insofar as this legitimises the mission, it also sanctifies the over-turning of traditional social order, including traditional beliefs and certain aspects of customary law. The latter are thought of as a temporary stage in collective history.

The centrality of literacy to the historical consciousness described thus far posits evangelical organisations, most notably the KBC, as crucial agents of intellectual advancement. In this context, mission schools and seminaries occupied a central place alongside state colleges and universities. Unlike the former, early seminary graduates came to possess new forms of cultural capital and ritual language that afforded them a privileged role in mediating religious meanings.[91] Yet they also acquired prestige in the secular realm. Importantly, the American Baptist mission staff not only supported the emergence of indigenous church leadership but made it their ideal. While ministry and evangelisation remained their primary concern, the ambition of the missionaries went further than that. Writing in the *Baptist Missionary*

90 It it worth repeating how this notion constructs *a* people (or, as more fundamentalist Baptist reverends sometimes told me, *the* people, God's chosen flock). In either case, what is of essence is the unitary national community – the reference is not to Christians or even Christian Kachins but *the* Kachin.

91 It should not be assumed that acquisition of literacy or the religious meanings it opened up for the studious were in any sense straightforward processes. Cannell has shown how, among the Bicol, both the original choices made by the Catholic missionaries in translating Biblical terms, and the subsequent readings by the converts, left open numerous possibilities for modified meanings despite best attemts at orthodoxy (2006, 159-160). In the Kachin context, Leach notes how Hanson's influential translation appropriated "a luxurious, elaborate language of *dumsa ga* (rituals) and *jaiwa ga* (sagas) for his Bible" that were incomprehensible to ordinary lay people already at the time of their writing (1947, 632). It remains beyond the scope of the present work to trace the full implications of this but anecdotal evidence from my own fieldwork suggests that many Kachin Christians, particularly among the younger generation, admit difficulty comprehending the language of the Jinghpaw Bible. If nothing else, this shows that meanings integral to conversion and accompanying literary traditions remain complex and undeterministic.

Magazine of 1906, missionary John E. Cummings phrased his visions for the Kachin thus.

> *The first fruitage is trained leaders, communities transformed and an educational system established. While most Burma Christians are farmers, leaders are found in every walk of life, including pastors, teachers, government clerks, inspectors of schools, doctors, lawyers, business men, clerks of stores, telegraph operators, engineers, machinists, and others, no one of whom could have attained his present position without the training of the schools* (Cummings 1906, 178).

The modernist underpinnings of the above commentary bear far greater semblance to the visions of Tertius Doi at the start of this chapter than to the actual economic realities of the Kachin Hills at the turn of the 20th century. Trade in rubber and jade – the main sources of Kachin wealth in the late 19th century – had been severely disrupted by the changing geopolitical landscape. Kachin chiefs, conscious of the threat that the emerging colonial order represented to their authority and resources, were becoming increasingly defensive. Sadan notes how, in the Bhamo area that constituted one of the main economic hubs at the time, even the colonial military recruitment dwindled between 1898 and 1917.[92] It is highly unlikely that the author of the excerpt above was unaware of this context. One of the aims was most likely convincing funders back home to maintain their support for the mission. However, there is little reason to doubt that the tone also reflects the missionaries' vision of a holistic transformation of socio-economic landscape. This was a vision premised upon the diffusion of formally educated Christian leadership through all walks of life, integrating the territorial expanse of the Kachin areas with what, as the quote from Maran La Raw suggested earlier (see page 138 above), was already perceived to be a more quickly modernizing Burma.

The 1961 issue of Jinghpaw Shi Laika contains a story that deserves to be quoted for its images of Christian leadership and the territorial outreach of religious organisations. During the school break of 1961, we are told, two girls from the Shahpwi middle school, L. Lum Nan and B. Hawng Nyoi, were sent to do mission

92 Sadan cites Enriquez's diaries that lament "the conservatism of [Kachin elders] who cannot bear any change their ancestral way of life" and therefore discourage the youth from enlisting (Sadan 2013, 211 fn. 62).

work in a remote area some 130 miles from Shahpwi. One by one, the story lists the hardships they encountered on the way: passing the 1850 foot suspension bridge that few travellers dared to undertake, crossing a wild river on a makeshift raft, finding their way through snow-covered ridges and deep valleys, the girls marched bravely north. Rice had to be substituted by corn [*hkainu*] and sour rice [*chagyi shat*]. After weeks of tribulations they finally reach their destination.

> *The old men and women, young and old, when they heard of their coming, came to see and listen. Our messengers were tired but content. The people requested the messengers come back and repeat their message whenever they could. Once again, the congregation wishes to express their great gratitude to the KBC Committee. In the beginning, our association was agitated, unknowledgeable, and harsh* [wam wam rai n chye n kaw kahti gari rai nga ga ai]. *However, these days, KBC sent their teachers to help and therefore we express our great thanks. Since we are still like unripe chickens* [n-kung ai Uhkai ni], *we always earnestly ask for more help.*

Several themes in this narrative stand out. The choice of sending two young women on an evangelical mission is itself significant. David Savage has shown how the Protestant missionaries working in early 19th century India laboured to create "a fully articulate ideology of female education" on the basis of contemporary British notions thereof (1997, 201). Likewise, Alice Lewis notes on the influence of the China Inland Mission in changing the profile of Hua Miao women, helping them develop education and healthcare (Lewis 2000, 93). Despite bringing to the field late 19th century notions of family life and equality, some Baptist missionaries to the Kachin Hills appear to have been troubled by the local gender norms. For example, after visiting a village wedding ceremony, H.E. Safford expresses his indignation at what he perceived as the young bride moving into life-long slavery at her husband's household (1909). More importantly, missionary wives and single female missionaries were instrumental in running the schools and organizing various communal activities in the Kachin State from the earliest decades of the mission. They encouraged local women to assume increasingly public roles in church life through women's societies that were particularly apt at fundraising activities (Tegenfeldt, 1974: 172).

While the Kachin Baptist congregational hierarchy in post-independence Burma had hardly done away with gender inequalities (save for minor breakaway factions, women cannot rise to the rank of Baptist reverends to this day), the choice of two young girls as heroes must have been inspiring for female converts graduated from the mission schools. The next image from the cover of 1990-1991 issue of *Myihtoi Ma* communicates a similar message (Illustration 13). It depicts two young women in graduation gowns posing in front of the KTC main building in Nawng Nan. In both instances, it is the possession of privileged doctrinal knowledge and formal membership in the KBC that signifies the new social status for these women. While the two girls venturing out from Shahpwi were only school students, their status made "young and old" listen to their message of salvation. It is, of course, questionable how much embellishment the authors wove into the narrative. But even allowing for certain fictional content, its stated – and printed – message remains significant.

Equally important is the sense of territoriality the narrative implies. As I have already indicated, the mission was constantly working to bring remote communities into the larger Kachin Christian polity, and consolidating its existing territorial reach. Regardless of their limited readership, Kachin Christian publications have historically worked to create a stronger sense of geographical unity, incorporating isolated highland tracts into the popular imagination. In the process, they also established a hierarchy between different areas of the Kachin Hills, setting the pristine but 'raw' homeland of the hill tribes against the enlightened population centres that harboured bigger mission compounds. The authors of the article end with a customary salutation to the KBC that implicitly sets the terms for this difference. The association (meaning the congregational institution responsible for that particular area) started out as "agitated, unknowlegable, and harsh"– terms still commonly used today in reference to Kachin past – and it is only through the support of the KBC that these undesirable qualities could be overcome. This last remark is illustrative of pervasive notions of immaturity and parental care that are commonly employed in reference to Christian organisations and the wider society. These, in turn, are relevant to understanding the popular attitudes towards clerical interventions in the sphere of education and the responses they elicit from other

relevant actors in the field (see Chapter 7 below).

"Growing up": Narratives of discipline and care

> *That's why missionary came in just to open school for Kachin people. First of all, you know, the Kachin people are very rude …* [the Burmese], *they compare* [us] *with dogs, animals. But in missionary eyes the Kachin people are not very rude* [but] *very obedient, and very simple. That's why they open schools that some day they* [could] *be educated and then they will grow up* [laughter]. *That's why missionary came in, gave … advice to the Kachin elders. 'Don't stay with Burmese people, after ten years they* [the British administration] *will just open schools and roads and everything, after that you will get independence. But some of the elder Kachin people didn't understand about it… until today…*

Headmistress of Yangon Kachin Baptist Convention Education Office, Sarama Seng Ja. Yangon, March 2013.

The above quote resonates with many narrative elements found in the early missionary sources from the Kachin areas. For example, in a language common for the Anglo-American missionaries at the time, Gustaf A. Sword wrote the following about the Kachin communities with whom he had worked for decades. "With no written language and with nothing uplifting in their religion they have slid about as low as the human race can go. Their priests are not concerned with their gross ignorance or with the moral life in the village. … The religion of the Kachins contains no moral prohibitions, and natural desires are not curbed" (1954, 33). A little later, Sword quotes Ola Hanson, the father of Jinghpaw grammar, "They give free rein to their passions and live almost on the level with animals" (ibid., 37). After that the missionary softens, commenting on Kachin tact and etiquette, good manners and consideration for the fellow man. "[T]heir most charming traits", he concludes, "are their willingness to learn and their openmindedness" (ibid., 41). Taking up the proverbial 'white man's burden', the missionaries pictured themselves as sympathetic protectors or loving parents of a whole society. The latter they sought to represent as simple, verdant mountain-folk, oppressed and discriminated against by the modern world they were still too young to comprehend.

These sentiments were related to the often very real role the mission played as a mediator between the local communities and increasingly imposing novel state institutions.

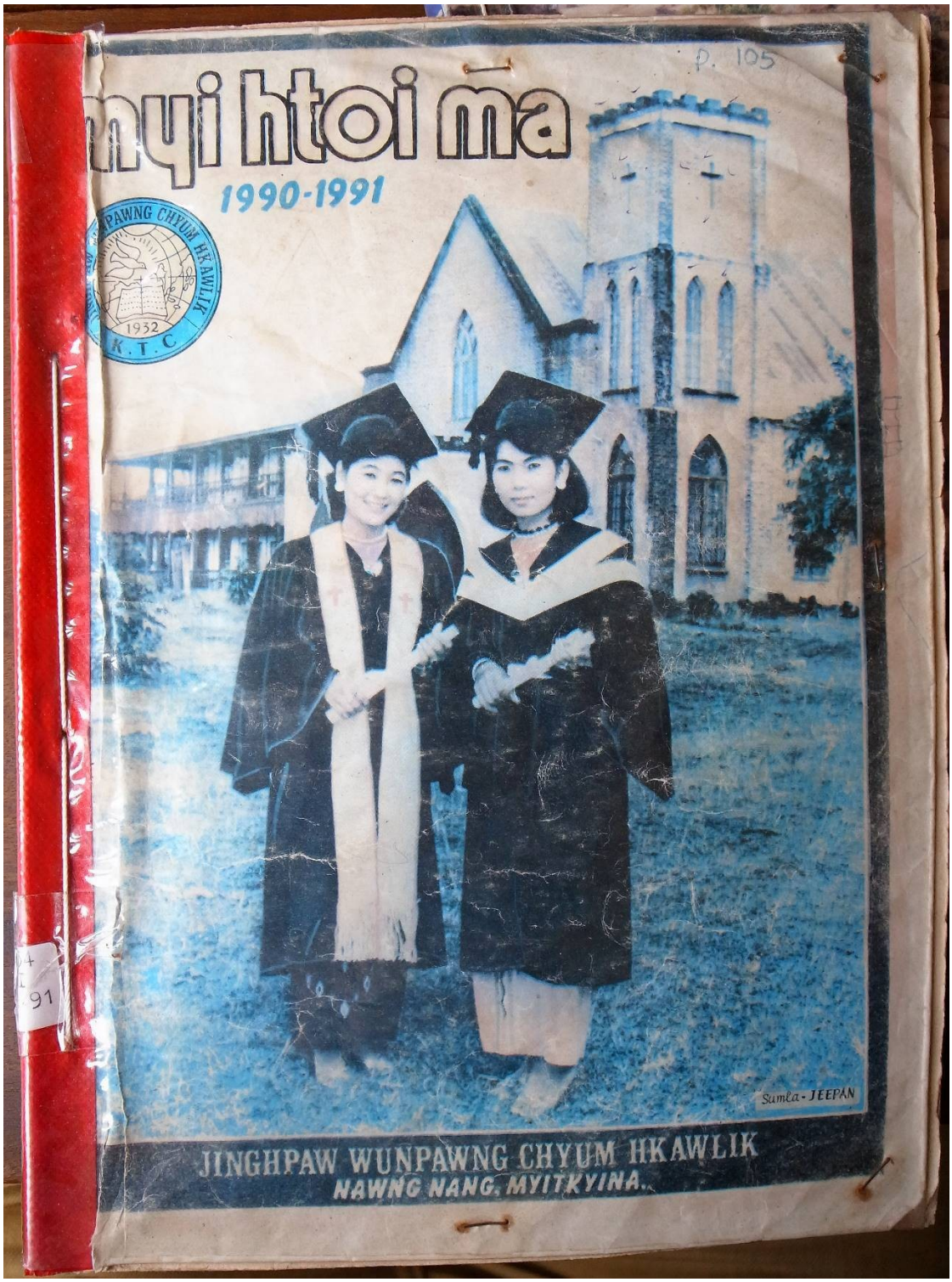


Illustration 13
Myihtoi Ma [Prophet Youth], 1990-1991

As their colleagues did across similar settings (Woodberry 2011, 120– 122), contemporary sources commonly depict the early Baptist missionaries to the Kachin Hills as standing for the legal rights of the indigenous tribes vis-à-vis the distant and indifferent colonial bureaucracy (e.g. Sword 1954, 51). In land disputes, feuds, and other court settlements, the missionary played the role of guardians over tribesmen who lacked comprehension of the legal codes of the Empire, which were forced upon them with increasing territorial zeal. "In many cases the Kachins did not know their constitutional rights, and only after we told them did they learn that the officials who governed them were also restricted and limited by certain rules", writes Sword (1954, 58). As I have already suggested, the actual contests over legal codes in the colonial Kachin Hills far surpasses this rather simplistic portrayal (for a more comprehensive analysis see Sadan 2013; Leach 1947). However, in the context of the present analysis, it points to the way the Baptist mission portrayed itself as occupying a crucial point of convergence between tradition and modernity.

Talking to Kachin Christians about the status of religious organisations, I often encountered the narrative of growing up and attaining proper upbringing and cultivation. As already mentioned, this discourse was fostered by the early missionaries. However, there is a crucial juncture in the popular imagination that takes place in the early 1960s when the general missionary population came to be expelled by Ne Win's government. I have previously quoted Tu Ja, a former Baptist minister who still occasionally taught Bible classes. Owing to his former profession, we touched on these topics many times over the course of my fieldwork. A respected educator in his native Myitkyina, his opinions and insights are all the more valuable for their considerable local influence.

"We were left on our own," he told me in his garden in late 2012, "and God wanted us to take responsibility for ourselves. [American] Missionaries had cared for us like children, but a child grows up, you see, and now we had to be on our own two feet". Some months later, Tu Ja retold the story in more confrontational terms, hinting at an adolescence that had outgrown the former familial order.

> *You see, Mart, you should be very careful with what you say there* [in Myitkyina]. *Even the missionaries… When they first came, the Kachin looked up to them feeling*

very humble. They were teaching them the way to true living God. We had no knowledge at the time. No writing. We were only wild people. But when the Holy Bible was translated into Kachin, we started to do our own good works. Soon there were so many Kachin missionaries, so many reverends! Outside they were still very polite to those American fathers. They had helped us a lot. But finally people tolerated them no more. They told them to pack up and leave and sent them away!

The story was ended with a sort of mock exultation that my interlocutor loved to weave in for dramatic effect. Yet there was also a serious hint at the *realpolitik* of local church life and clerical authority. It is the acquisition, then, of Scriptural literacy, a watershed passed with the completion of Hanson's Jinghpaw Bible, that marks the point of tentative adulthood for the nation. Yet, from the standpoint of Baptist Christians, that adulthood is inextricably tied to organised religion, institutions of which must guide the rest of the society on the singular path they came. Importantly, these ideas also presuppose an "imagined community" in Andersonian sense (2006). I now turn to several historical conjectures linking Baptist missionary activities to the emergence of *Jinghpaw Wunpawng* nationalism. This is not to suggest that the movement could be attributed solely to the Christian missions or that the latter were even its central agents. However, their influence should not be overlooked, particularly in view of the present-day prominence of organisations such as the KBC, and their intimacy with the ruling political and military elites in Laiza.

Christian organisations and Wunpawng nationalism

That Christian conversion patterns and extends communal identity has been long recognized. As noted by Harvey Whitehead, Christianity presumes "commonality of forms of worship and belief within a vast population of anonymous others" (2006, 302). It is no coincidence that the first nominal All Kachin Annual Meeting, held in Bhamo in 1910, coincided with the year that the Kachin Baptist Convention was founded. From 1912 till 1917, this became an annual occasion, rotating from district to district and held at the expense of local churches. After 1917, the event became triennial, and each district held its own yearly meetings (Tegenfeldt 1974, 150). Though the main drive behind these gatherings was evangelisation, they also

worked towards actualising a new type of "imagined community" (Anderson 2006 [1983]), based on shared linguistic and literary identity, a canonised system of beliefs and religious hierarchies, and an expanding geographical imagination transcending the locality while simultaneously incorporating it into a larger geopolitical realm.

This is not to suggest that the Kachin tribes had historically lacked a wider geographical awareness. Both scholarly and tell-tale evidence exists of Kachin tribesmen raiding, trading and serving in arms far from the Kachin heartland.[93] However, I am following Whitehead's argument in Melanesian context when he suggests that what Christianisation introduced over existing territorial networks was religious canonisation and centralization that did not exist in traditional cosmologies (2006, 300-303). Whitehead notes how this process vastly expanded on traditional communal identities to include an anonymous body of fellow worshippers. I would add that, on the level of ethno-national imagination actively propagated by the missionaries, that body was even larger insofar as it also incorporated those yet-to-be-turned. It would be fallacious to assume that an epistemological shift did not take place with the establishment of permanent foreign missions, formal schooling, and indigenous print media. Together with the colonial military service – that primarily influenced those holding senior rank (Leach, 1974: 614) – they exercised significant influence on the Kachin national imagination in the early decades of the 20th century.

A fascinating anecdote exemplifying how new sentiments of imagined community manifested itself in religious settings can be found in the field notes of Mrs. Hanson. In her 1932 manuscript on the Kachin Jubilee of 1927, she records the following exchange between two Kachin women who spontaneously grabbed each other's hand in the middle of a planning meeting: "Isn't this wonderful? Why we are sisters! I don't know who you are and you don't know who I am, but it doesn't make any difference. We are still like sisters. We never could have gotten together like this, if the Book had not come back to us" (cited in Tegenfeldt 1974, 172).

This reference to the "Book" and its influence on community formation is well-

93 For some examples Sadan 2013, 43–44, 96–97, 152; Leach 1954, 20–22, 186, 240

supported by theorists of nationalism, who have long stressed the importance of the printing press and print-languages for the nascent national (B. Anderson 2006; Gellner 2006; Hobsbawm 1990; McLuhan 1962). The publication from 1914 onwards of indigenous print media such as the *Jinghpaw Shi Laika*, the first Jinghpaw news journal established by the missionaries, is highly significant in this context. These periodicals worked towards standardisation and primacy of Jinghpaw, which would gradually occupy a dominant position over other Kachin dialects. As already noted, they were also instrumental in reproducing geographical imaginaries, and situated the Kachin *buga* [homeland] in a larger universe of nation states. The cover story of 1914 October issue, for example, looks at the onset of the First World War, giving a list of the countries involved and the reasons that led them to war (Jinghpaw Shi Laika 1914). It is of no small importance that the same issue includes a reference by Rev. Ola Hanson to "*Anhte pawng Jinghpaw masha ni*" [our Kachin people], one of the earliest references to that collective denominator (see Sadan 2013, 247).

As early as 1915, the potential readership of *Jinghpaw Shi Laika* was estimated at 1500. Moreover, as Tegenfeldt points out, this figure did not count the significantly bigger illiterate population to whom the contents would have been read or communicated (ibid., 153). Over the next few decades, this figure rose significantly as the mission schools expanded their reach and were increasingly supported by government schooling and military service. Looking at the KBC school enrolment alone, one can see that while in 1915 there were 471 pupils in total, by 1927 this figure had risen to 1824, and in 1940 to 4577 (ibid., 157). It would be a fair conjecture to assume that the reach of Kachin print media underwent at least comparable, if not bigger exponential growth. Moreover, Eric Hobsbawm has classically argued that as long as a national dialect is an actually spoken language, "it does not matter that those who speak it are a minority, so long as it is a minority of sufficient political weight" (1990, 60). In other words, given sufficient time and resources, the centralising tendencies of state institutions can endow smaller groups and organisations with disproportionate power in society. The same could be said of the authority and influence of Christian organisations in the Kachin polity through the 20th century.

Christian education offered graduates new avenues for social advancement. While arguably a minority in the Kachin society well into the Second World War era, they occupied an increasingly dominant position in the changing political landscape of colonial modernity. Speaking of the prevailing situation shortly before the War, Leach notes that "the intelligentsia of the hill peoples is now almost entirely Christian". Always a pragmatist, he goes on to argue that the "Christianisation of the educated politically conscious section of Kachin society thus represents a very serious obstacle to long term political assimilation into the Burmese body politic" (1947, 698). This composition was, of course, entirely in keeping with the evangelical aims that the American Baptist mission, among others, had set for itself from the beginning. Indigenisation was one of their foundational principles.

One of the few avenues open to the Kachin to attain literacy outside of mission schools was the military service in the British colonial army. Even here, there was a tendency towards Christian conversion. Leach (1947) notes that, in theory, the Kachin levies were permitted animist worship and were occasionally given patches of land close to encampments to erect ritual aids. However, in actual practice, this arrangement remained merely nominal. Far from their ancestral villages and indispensable services of the *dumsa* priests who seldom enlisted in the army, most Kachin recruits were effectively cut off from all meaningful content of their religious practice (Leach 1947, 617; see also Tegenfeldt 1974, 173). This further contributed to the Christianisation of the educated classes while, at the same time, significantly expanding the support base of Christian organisations throughout the colonial era (see also Sadan 2013, 242-251).

The above examples are far from exhaustive in their scope. However, they do illustrate the historical trajectories that, by the 1990s, had made the Christian organisations, most notably the KBC, influential political and intellectual elites in the Kachin society. This historical position has legitimised their dominant voice in matters of national development today. Their institutional standing and reach puts them in a particularly privileged position to define local imaginaries of modernity, expressing them in locally meaningful idioms. As I will argue below, these meanings are rooted in a traditional culture that has been partially appropriated,

partially superimposed by Biblical doctrine and nationalist ideologies.

"All things are become new": Imagery of progress and change in Christian artwork

The last part of this chapter focuses on expressions of modernity by taking a leap in time to a period starting with the 1990s. In order to bring out some of the pervasive narratives, as well as contradictions therein, I look at the artistic representation of ideas for national development in the *Myihtoi Ma* journal published by the Kachin Theological College (KTC) in Nawng Nan, Myitkyina. The journal has always been issued in small print-runs, written predominantly in Jinghpaw with an occasional article or reference in English. Importantly, it was never meant for circulation outside the tightly-knit communities of faith. Unlike the wide majority of periodicals published in Myanmar at the time, the authors of *Myihtoi Ma* would have been able to work outside the conventional bounds of Burmese censorship. As such, they present a unique insight into Kachin Baptist aspirations of development and modernisation. At the same time, they hint at tensions around cultural preservation and religious piety vis-a-vis the changes and effacement introduced by modernity. As such, they can be read as local expressions of the "anxious transcendence" of the modern subject suggested by Keane (2006). The authorship of these images can be attributed to a young class of Kachin intellectuals who, at the time of original publication, might have occupied a similar social position that the educators with whom I collaborated through my fieldwork occupy today. As already noted, the KTC has long seen itself – and not without reason – as one of the centres of Kachin intellectual life and is certainly perceived as such by the general population. As I argued in the second chapter of this thesis, it is precisely their traditional authority in this field that has recently attracted subtle critiques by some of the younger Kachin educators.

Explicitly, the first image below conforms to the quote from Reverend Tertius Doi and the visions presented by the founding missionaries, though their conspicuous use of symbols of economic development to depict ideas of national and spiritual progress (Illustration 14). The emphasis on the Kachin cultural legacies is made

through reference to traditional patters and *manau* poles, which remain the foremost visual cues to the local Kachin identity.[94] The ubiquitous *manau* poles are presented in heavily modernised manifestations, standing atop paved *manau* grounds that are commonly found in bigger population centres such as Myitkyina.[95] While traditionally erected on a seasonal basis and left to rot once their particular role had been fulfilled (Leach, 1947), modern *manau* squares serve as foremost symbols of territoriality and centres of national sentiment. As such, the visual language refers to a settled, centralised polity who has emerged from the nostalgic mountains drowned in sunset on the horizon. This recalls the distinction between urbanised (mission) centres and wild hinterlands alluded to earlier. In the background, the advertisements and logos on buildings bearing Jinghpaw inscriptions talk of booming trade, as do shipping terminals lining the Irrawaddy River in the shade of skyscrapers overlooking the *Manau* Park in central Myitkyina. The central visual theme, however, is the long line of university graduates circling around the *manau* poles in traditional dance procession brandishing their swords. The *manau* posts have been decorated for the occasion, nine in total (instead of the common six). Significantly, the central post symbolising sun and masculinity is here depicted with a pattern of open textbooks crowned with a Christian cross, while the pole to its left represents a stylised version of the KIO flag (a significant risk in the mid-1990s despite the formal ceasefire).[96]

As noted in Chapter 3, the infamous but vital railway line connecting Myitkyina to the rest of Myanmar – and thus to central powers in the south – remains a source of significant tensions, something of which the author of the images would have been well aware. While crucial for transporting people and commodities, the railway has also long been an extension of foreign political and military domination of the Kachin areas. For most of my friends and colleagues in Myitkyina, the officialdom

94 The history and significance of manau has been extensively analysed in Sadan 2013, 406-69, see also Leach 1947, 156-158, 270

95 For a brief ethnographic account of the political concerns informing the design of manau posts in central Myitkyina in the late 1990s, see (Sadan 2013, 424-425). Among other things, Sadan shows how Christianity has long been a point of tension.

96 Despite the tatmadaw and KIA signing a formal ceasefire in 1994 any overt expression of political allegiance to the organisation outside KIA controlled areas was punishable by imprisonment or worse under both SLORC (1988-

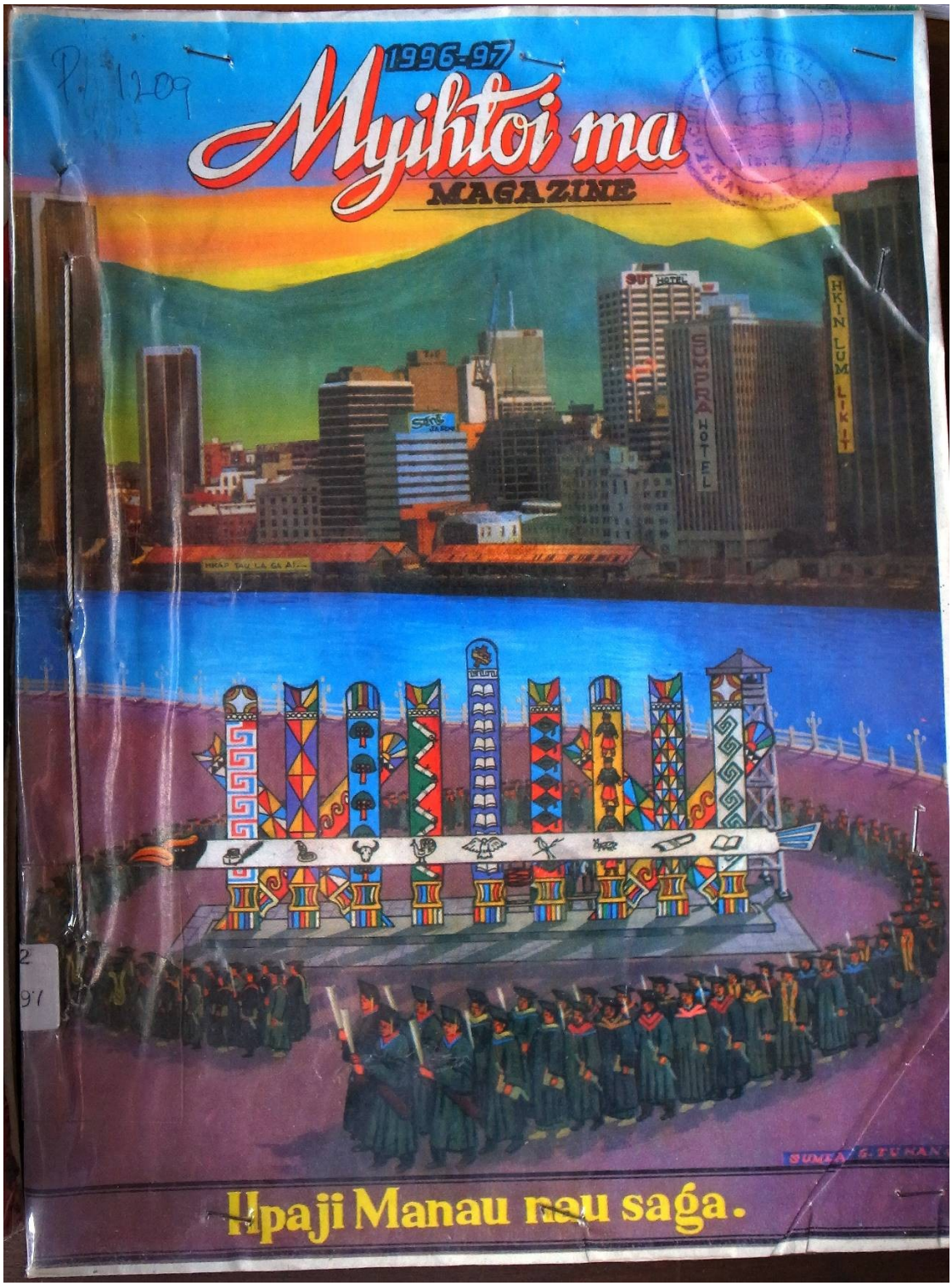


Illustration 14
Myihtoi Ma [Prophet Youth], 1996-1997

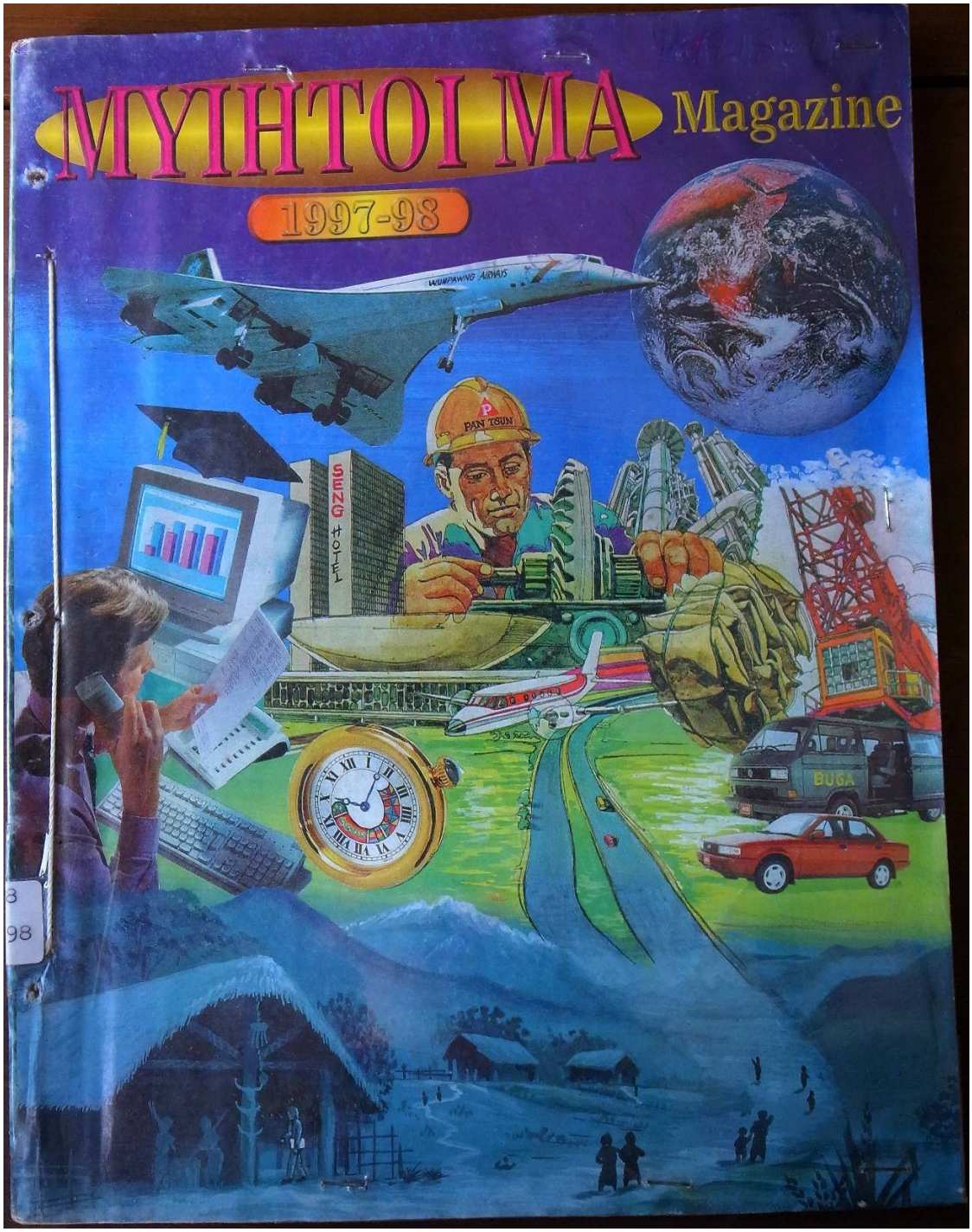


Illustration 15
Myihtoi Ma, 1997-1998

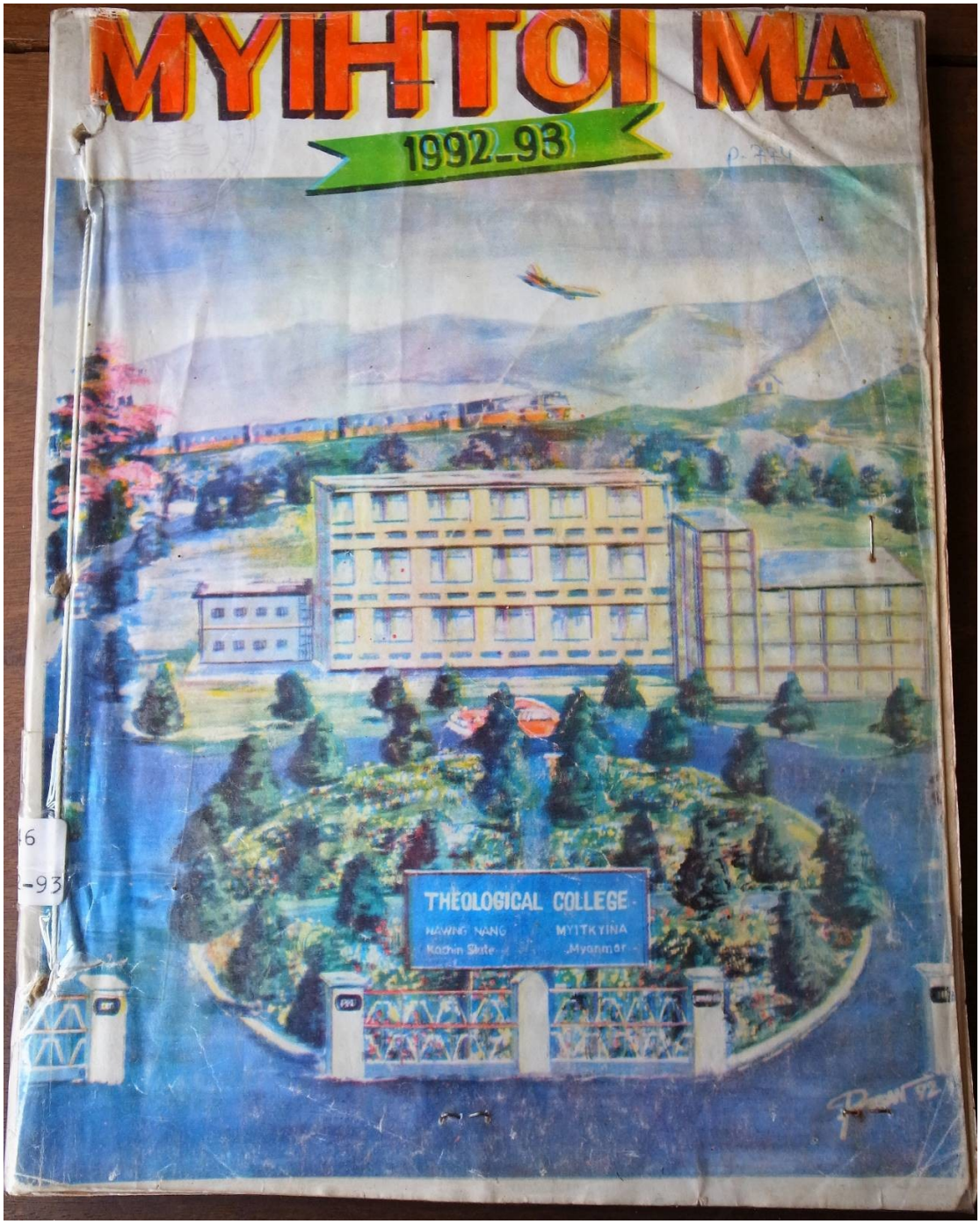


Illustration 16
Myihtoi Ma, 1992-1993

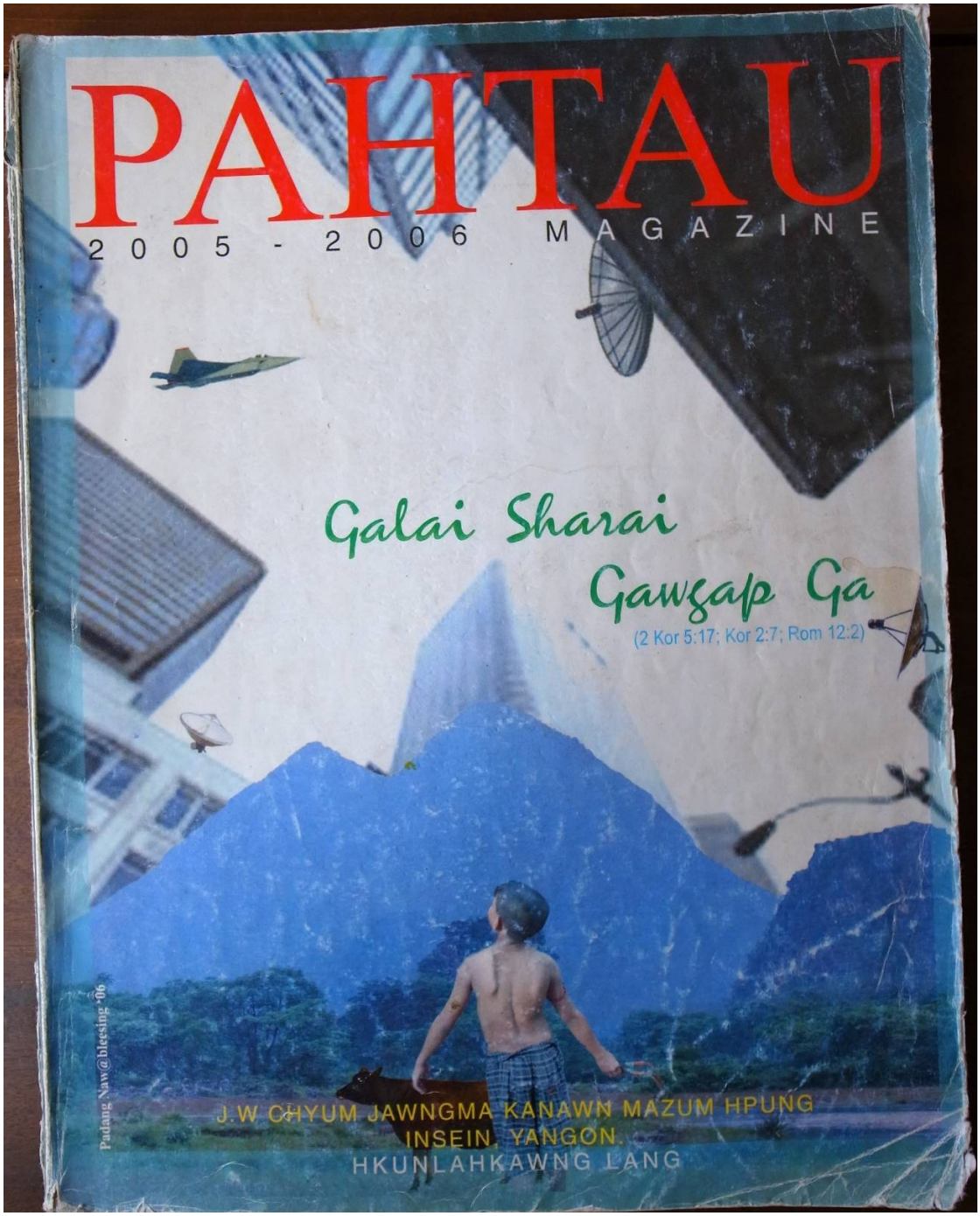


Illustration 17
Pahtau [Horn], 1997-1998

in charge of the rail services was commonly perceived through ethnic markers. Dysfunctional and inequitable management standing for delays, queues and bribery, together with the deteriorated infrastructure, are seen as rooted in the same corrupt bureaucracy controlled by the Bamar majority ("as crooked as the railway lines are straight" as one Myitkyina pastor jokingly told me in 2012). Most train

rides are punctuated by sporadic identity checks by the railway police and army, who symbolise (and represent) the Myanmar regime. In terms of urban space, the Myitkyina station and its surroundings are felt to harbour various social ills (conspiracy theories suggesting Nay Pyi Daw's involvement abound). In an unprecedented move in 2012, the KIA was rumoured to have started mining the railway line after it learned that the *tatmadaw* was using it for troop transport. As shown by Sadan, these perceptions have historical continuity extending to the post-independence era when the Kachin inhabitants of Myitkyina felt excluded from the centre of State capital altogether (2013, 312). Then, like now, these perceptions resonated with wider political and economic grievances of inequality and regional marginalization. It is in this light that the image of a train above Nawng Nang College assumes a more complex meaning than that of linear progress towards modernity. What the author depicts, and what the wider discourse of Kachin Baptist discourse purports, is a qualitative change – not unlike that envisioned by the early American missionaries – in the socio-political landscape of the Kachin State. By superimposing the train on the Kachin Theological College, the artwork can be read as both a political statement and a visionary dream. In either case, the Baptist organisation carrying the Kachin Biblical message remains the central agent of change.

This, in turn, links back to the two previous images. As much as they are about visions of development, they also signify particular notions of "re-territorialization" as understood by the political geographer Anssi Paasi (1999). They assert a need for ethno-national self-expression, linguistic primacy of Jinghpaw and greater regional integration under enlightened Kachin leadership. Tacitly, they engage with the collective insecurities about the economic backwardness of the Kachin State and lack of competitiveness with larger regional economies. Grievances about the natural environment described in Kiik's work (2012) are addressed through images of untouched landscapes beyond the emergent modernity (a future once again, under management of Kachin elites). While the overall tone of the artwork presented here remains staunchly optimistic, it is also capable of perceiving the deep-seated tensions between these visions and the existing social realities.

Pahtau [Horn] journal (Illustration 17) is published by the Kachin Jehovah's

Witnesses Kingdom Hall in Yangon. As such, it stands on the margins Kachin Christian community. I have chosen to include it as an example of a multi-layered critique both for and against change. The caption on the cover reads *Galai Sharai Gawgap Ga* [prepare for change, let us build up]. The three Biblical references (2 Cor 5:17; Cor 2:7; Rom 12:2) emphasize spiritual change, the parting of the old and the coming of age. "Old things are passed away, all things are become new" as the King James Version translates it (2 Cor 5:17).[97] The actual collage itself, however, is entirely worldly in its depiction of the symbols of modernity. Fighter jets, satellite dishes, and high-rise buildings are set over and above the hills and paddies of the Kachin *buga*. A boy, clad in his *longyi*, looks skyward as if dreaming or marvelling, an embodiment of a perceived past that is still stubbornly the lived present.

Raising the nation

Before finishing this chapter, I would like to return to the notions of upbringing and growth that, as noted earlier, occupied a prominent place in the missionary discourse on the Kachin polity. The following excerpt from a focus group conducted in late June 2011 in Yangon shows how this imagery is employed in contemporary discussions of national development. In light of the artistic imagery above, the debates that emerged that evening were animated by similar expectations of modernity in the ethno-nationalist register. The moral dilemmas encountered by the urbanised Kachin youth, most of whom were semi-permanent residents in Yangon, further illustrate the challenges of reconciling their nationalist sentiments with the more cosmopolitan realities of modern Yangon.

I had been invited along to a gathering of an English conversation club that was organised by a group of Kachin youth living in the former capital. These events were fairly common among more active graduate students and young professionals. As was customary, the meeting was chaired by the participants on a voluntary

97 Full references stand as follows: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:17). "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (Cor 2:7). "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of our mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom 12:2).

basis. This, together with the anonymous setting of a sheltered park, allowed for a relatively open discussion to emerge. The group of eleven was made up of a diverse set of youth. There were some who had come to Yangon to get a university degree, as well as several young professionals who had landed prestigious employment with a foreign NGO or in the rapidly growing business sector. The majority referred to themselves as Kachin, though a few were of other ethnic nationalities. As the regular venue at the British Council was occupied for another event, we had decided to meet at a park near the Kandawgyi lake which offered some shade in the scorching Yangon afternoon.

We had been trying out different conversational language games when Elizabeth, a Jinghpaw woman in her late twenties, proposed the following thought experiment for the group. "If you could provide scholarships for 10 Kachin students or a 100 Burmese, which would you do?". The murmur from the turf signalled that she had hit the right spot. It was an abstract dilemma to which most of those present related on multiple levels. To begin with, almost everyone was struggling to find funding for studies abroad. "*Alaa*, how can you make such a choice?" one of the girls protested. "Today you must", Elizabeth laughed. "But I am Kachin so I want to get it myself", said another girl. "How can you give yourself?" the first speaker retorted "you don't give scholarship to yourself. This is about your community!".

Even more importantly, all participants would identify themselves, in one way or another, with belonging to a younger progressive generation. Not only were they internet-savvy and consumers of foreign media, but many also had already participated in training workshops run by NGOs and activists at home or by the neighbouring ASEAN countries. They were attuned to a particular rhetoric of development. Words like 'grassroots', 'community', 'inclusive' and 'dialogue' would often figure in their conversation that was usually a mixture of Jinghpaw, English and Burmese. Last but not least, with few exceptions, they were passionately nationalistic, standing for what each of them perceived to be in the best interests of the Kachin cause. Notably, the young woman who had first protested raised her hand first. "I think I choose to give the scholarship to a hundred Burmese", she said, "it is more people so this way it is better". Two men protested that she was a Kachin but she remained firm. "These days, we cannot only think

like this! Education is for everybody. I can do more good. If I give to ten, who will get all the money? It will be a waste!". The two youngsters were giggling to each other, pleased with their dare but unable to carry on the debate. After a brief pause another young man, a local law student, chipped in. "It is better for Myanmar. We need more educated people to lead. The leaders now are not educated people. They don't know what is good for people in the country. They cannot see. But if 100 Burmese get more education then they can work for everybody". A few of the other nodded. "No!", the woman kneeling next to me said, "we must give to Kachin! You know, if Burmese get everything we have nothing! We already have nothing – they took away everything! No jade, no forest, no gold – I cannot give to them". In an argument I had already heard elder Kachin use to illustrate their distrust of democracy, one of the boys replied, "We give a thousand kyats to every Burmese and to every Kachin – how much will then be in Burma, how much in Kachin State? They already have much more – we need to support our own people".

It was at this stage that one of the organizers of the club joined the argument. From our past conversations I knew her as a highly intelligent young activist who held strong views on national reconciliation and peace building. A devout Christian, she also had a humanist streak quite rare amongst the Kachin Baptists in my circle of friends and colleagues. "It is a difficult problem because we need development everywhere. Sometimes we must make sacrifice to help others. But," she said intently eyeing each of her peers, "at this time, our Kachin State is not ready. We cannot make that sacrifice. We must first grow. We need to get strong, then we can make those sacrifices. Because we are still very young and weak, we must first look after our own people. I choose 10 Kachin to get scholarship so they can uplift our people first. After we grow to be strong we can help others too". This exchange shows how the earlier narratives of growing-up and care, used by the American Baptist missionaries in reference to the Kachin as a collective body, are being reiterated by younger generations. It also resonates with local conceptions of ethno-national boundaries, defined in relation to the perceived effects of larger economic and political structures, and the anxieties they generate.

Conclusion

The quote by Tertius Doi, a Kachin reverend and philosopher, that stands at the start of this chapter, presents a compelling example of the intertwining of Christian discourse with vivid imagery of technological modernity. I remember being puzzled when I first encountered these lines in early 2012. Kachin clergy I had met up until that time had been vocal defenders of local Christian traditions and were firmly conservative in their views. It was only much later that I began to understand the layers of meaning and practice underlying this conjuncture and the tensions that it carried. Most notably, I had greatly underestimated the weight that clerical authority carries in the secular affairs of the contemporary Kachin society.

This chapter has sought to trace the historical trajectories that have endowed the Kachin Christian organisations, most notably the KBC, with their present public authority in matters of national development. In the first part, I looked at the early missionary sources that talked about the socio-economic context of their contemporary Kachin communities. The historical evidence suggests that neither the field of activities nor the influence of the early American Baptist Mission can be understood in merely evangelical terms. While church growth was undoubtedly the principal goal of the mission, the ambition of the missionaries went much further than that. In addition to seeking religious and moral conversion, issues of general welfare were equally part of their agenda. To be sure, these were largely pursued to maximise the efficiency of evangelisation. But whether in quest of a thriving Christian polity, or for more humanistic aims, the surviving records point to far-reaching social concerns amongst the pioneering mission staff.

The influence of foreign missions also shaped local politics in significant ways. I agree with Kachin scholar La Seng Dingrin (2013) in that there has historically existed a strong link between Christian conversion and political aspirations of the Kachin tribes in Myanmar. Yet while his argument emphasises pre-existing animosity that found an outlet in Christianisation (Dingrin 2013, 133), I would rather suggest, with Sadan (2013), that religious antagonism towards Buddhism was as much part of the moral universe introduced by the missionaries as it was of economic and political events contemporaneous with Christianisation.

The present popularity of the KBC, along with other Christian organisations, is significant both from the point of view of formal education and of ethnic politics in the region. Churches have long played a central role in non-formal education, particularly indigenous languages, and continue to support a number of educational partnerships. The influence of Christianity on Kachin ethnic identification has been shown throughout this thesis. This does not mean that clerical influence in social affairs has been received without critique. Which brings me back, full-circle, to the arguments put forward in Chapter 2 Namely, that one area where the traditional authority of the clergy has been partially problematised is in the sphere of education and its future in Kachinland. It is through Nawng E Hku, NHTOI, and similar establishments that local critiques have emerged, not only towards the ideologies of Christian organisations but towards those backed by state actors. Rather than merely pointing to deficiencies in the present system, however, their programmes constitute effective assemblages within the larger apparatus of schooling. As noted in the Introduction, the latter is always potentially capable of producing new discourses and practices. All civil society organisations working in the field of private schooling that this thesis studies owe their beginnings to various Christian organisations and individuals. This suggests that Christianity's relationship to modernity is both complex and generative in ways that call for further scrutiny.

CONCLUSION

The central task of this thesis has been to investigate developments in the Kachin areas, both historically and in the present, that operate on the margins of state powers and with the ever-present threat of armed conflict. My primary focus has been on organisations and activists working outside the sphere of political elites in order to bring to focus developments in the Kachin society that have heretofore largely eluded ethnographic scrutiny. In so doing, I have concentrated on the nexus of schooling, religion and ethno-nationalist politics, which remain closely interlinked both ideologically and in organisational terms. I have sought to contextualise ethnographic observations of current issues with historical data, both to give greater validity to my claims on the national imaginaries rooted in tradition, and to emphasise the dynamics of change in this complex region. I have described practices and ideologies of schooling; Christian world-views in close relation to modernity; and encounters with the state. Through each successive chapter, my analysis has gravitated around the question of what animates the efforts of reformist educators in different areas and organisational settings. I have argued throughout that understanding their practice as a form of critique offers insights into social tensions, processes of statecraft, and politics of religion.

Perhaps most importantly from the perspective of wider theoretical debates with which this thesis engages, a key driver of the practice of educators and activists across the Kachin society have been notions of ethnicity and religious belonging. Together, they define the boundaries of the political community towards whom their efforts are directed, and bestows their efforts with legitimacy both locally (among the KIO and Christian organisations) and abroad (among aid organisations and diaspora communities). I have also shown how ethnicity constitutes more than a national ideology or political resource, influencing institutional practices, communal relations and existential dilemmas. As such, it both structures and is structured by social agency.

Ethnographic evidence suggests that Kachin communities continue to experience marginalisation in territorial, religious and demographic terms within the gradually changing political and economic order of the Union of Myanmar. The resulting grievances have only accentuated the geographical isolation and existing ascription of ethnic boundaries that continue to be central to local nationalist ideologies. During my first fieldwork visits in 2010, the majority of popular sentiments ran against the central government and, in particular, the Myanmar Army, who were seen as responsible for both historical injustices and contemporary deprivation. By the end of 2013, my field notes had seen far more numerous references to the negative sentiment against the Bamar as an ethnic category, defined on religious, moral and linguistic grounds. The follow-up visit in mid-2015 confirmed my earlier conclusions, despite gradual easing of restrictions on civil society action in the Myitkyina area. Rather than being evidence of irreconcilable sectarian conflict, these developments must be seen in the context of post-ceasefire politics of the Kachin State and its competing sovereignties.

Heightened ethno-nationalist sentiments have developed, and been shaped by the rampant destruction of natural environments and symbolic *buga* homelands, so central to the contemporary ethnic imagination. Central drivers have been the invasion of foreign extractive industries; the banning of most Kachin parties from the parliamentary politics on the Union level; continued symbolic and structural violence through educational and language policies; perceived supplanting of Christian communities and practice by the state-backed Buddhist *sangha*; and a host of smaller instances of structural and physical violence that have fomented distrust and alienation.[98] Most recently, the renewed hostilities between the KIA and the *tatmadaw* have led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis across the Kachin territories. The resulting popular sentiments were summed up in a conversation I had with Tu Ja, one of the founders of the NHTOI programme, in Myitkyina in 2013.

> *TJ: I think there are three questions that are going to be the main issues over the next few decades... First, how much is the government willing to give in to the*

98 It is possible that the 2015 parliamentary elections from which Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy emerged victorious will usher in significant changes in this complex landscape. However, the outcomes of these processes will remain subject to further research.

agreements, like Panglong agreement, that were made before independence? Second, how much can the international community support the minorities through policies? You know, the policy has always followed what happens inside the country. Third, how much can the minority people resist?

MV: Ok, so you have noted several things that others can do and you talk about popular resistance. What about ethnic nationalities like the Kachin? Do you think there is something they should be willing to sacrifice to reach political agreements with Nay Pyi Daw and regional authorities?

TJ: I will give you an example... [takes an empty plastic bottle and holds it out on its side] *Think of this as a raft floating in the ocean. The government always tells us you must compromise a little bit. This has always been the issue. But you see...*[pulls the cap from the bottle] *if we give in this bit we are lost* [lets the bottle sink]. *We have already given in on all issues. There is nothing more to compromise or all the Kachin will be lost...*

There could hardly be a more fitting depiction of the feelings of existential threat that pervades much of the public sentiment among the Kachin in relation to their present historical condition. It is also the key to understanding the logic of practice across many of the social fields, including education, organised religion, and armed political resistance.

This sense of threat also helps to understand the primary register through which the majority of my informants (re)imagined the future development of Kachinland. In these popular visions, the Kachin territories shall be governed by an ethnic nationality government, either independently from Myanmar or as a self-governing member in a federal union as promised by the Panglong agreement. It would not be unfair to say that, for many, desirable modernity has come to be envisioned through an ethno-nationalist lens that privileges political self-determination over economic and social developments. The greatest burden in this fight for autonomy is carried by the tens of thousands of refugees now dwelling in the IDP camps across the Kachin State, and the hundreds of villages exposed to the ever-shifting fronts of war. The bitter determination of their resistance was summed up in a story from one

public briefing that the KIA organised in Laiza, currently home to the highest number of IDP camps, at the height of the war in 2012. At the end of a long speech by one of the Kachin commanders, a crippled old man slowly stood up from the audience. Raising a frail finger he pointed to the leaders. "If you continue to fight for our freedom, we support you one hundred percent. But if you give in to the demands of the Burmese, you will have to compensate each one of us, every Kachin man and woman and child, one sack of rice per head!"[99]

As I have shown through this thesis, the everyday realities for the wide majority of Kachin remain radically different from the hopeful visions of self-determination and modernity. Across the Kachin State, corrupt state bureaucracies and military authorities continue to exercise arbitrary and often unchecked powers over the populace. In the KIO areas, to say nothing of smaller armed groups, governance is essentially martial law. Administrative decisions are taken in the Bamar dominated state-government or in distant Nay Pyi Daw with practically no recourse to inclusive dialogue or transparency. Most importantly from the perspective of schooling, an all-Burmese curriculum remains the norm from primary through secondary levels. For the great majority of school graduates, devalued and internationally discredited college programmes in Myanmar are the only viable educational track outside the theological seminaries. Schooling in the KIO areas remains in a particularly difficult situation due to institutional isolation and chronic lack of resources.

In the chapters above, I described what younger educators in the KIO schools and private initiatives described as pervasive status hierarchies and institutional practices that, they felt, were often detrimental to their practice. Indeed, current tensions around efforts to implement not only learner-centred methods but more inclusive institutional practices in general seem to confirm Jean Lave's suggestions that, as far as teachers' training is concerned, "everyday practice is a more powerful source of socialisation than intentional pedagogy" (1988). Conventions and traditions under which most teachers have been schooled, and the lack of established programmes for professional development, have meant that even those

99 The event is quoted here in verbatim. This popular story was later widely circulated through hearsay and Kachin print media, in different variations.

practices deemed problematic by many practising teachers have seen little change over the years. Even in settings like the Teachers Training College in Mai Ja Yang, where deliberate efforts for reform have taken place, existing values are often at odds with the new proposed methods.

In that sense, it is important to remember that ideas of modernity, while attractive and often eagerly employed by the local agents, are always also contested, particularly if they appear too far outside the horizon of possibilities. As Clive Whitehead concludes in his study of the British colonial education policies, "forces of change cannot be contained nor can schools survive unless they respond to the perceived needs of society" (1981, 78). Several examples in this thesis have shown that this applies to schooling in the contemporary Kachin areas as much as it did in the British colonial Burma. Apart from resistance by the established elites, the wrought process of implementing more inclusive teaching methods in the KIO schools shows the difficulties of driving change that is out of touch with both the means and the values of local communities. To borrow from Keane (2006), for those local leaders trying to introduce novel methods in the abstract, the bounds of social and material realities remain an anxious presence. Theological education continues to attract graduates from across the Kachin State over riskier alternatives. It is one of the few avenues of reliable social status and income while closely following the boundaries of established convention. On one level, this shows the importance of popular perceptions around schooling (Woronov 2008). On another, it suggests the influence that larger structural forces, including regional economies and political tensions, have on development of and success in schooling, particularly higher education (Bénéï 2008; Levinson & Pollock 2011).

This is not to say that important changes were not taking place. One of my key aims has been to communicate the voice and efforts of the educators, activists and other local agents of civilian development and reforms. This heterogeneous groups has been increasingly vocal in their critique towards the central policies affecting Kachin areas, as well as the governing elites in their own society. Local civil society activists have made use of impossibly scarce resources and the gradual opening-up of Myanmar to set up institutional structures unthinkable just two decades ago. I have focused on formal schooling as a crucial arena for these initiatives but equally

relevant examples could be drawn from environmental protection, health and humanitarian relief (e.g. Kiik in press). Crucial supportive role has been played by Kachin Christian organisations. By distributing scarce resources, offering facilities and harnessing the extensive church networks, they have helped establish a number of autonomous educational initiatives. Through several chapters, I have described the assemblages of Christian and ethno-nationalist ideologies in which these efforts are embedded. Rather than treating the two as fundamentally distinct, one might be better off using Asad's notion of "hybrid" to think of contemporary religious and political identities in the Kachin State (2003, 182). Yet I have also argued that the overarching authority of dominant Christian organisations is something that many educators have chosen to negotiate for greater independence. This inevitably leads to questions about the field of cultural production that has led to these efforts that are at once innovative and defiant.

When discussing education as an apparatus of reproduction, the evidence from the Kachin areas calls to mind a classic assertion by Paul Willis, that "cultural reproduction … always carries with it the *possibility* of producing - indeed in a certain sense it really lives out - alternative outcomes" (1977, 172). The Kachin educators with whom I worked, whether in smaller private schools or the KIO state-education, were implicated in highly restrictive structural constraints. The physical marginalisation and lack of infrastructure, together with the authoritarian governance of distant Nay Pyi Daw have been further aggravated by limits on movement imposed by the war. The field of schooling has been particularly hard-hit by these structural conditions, not least because national and international connections form a vital form of symbolic capital in this field. Despite this, important trans-border connections have been established; institutions have been built through individual and collective struggle; and new paradigms have been constructed and experimented with through much of the past decade. The same could be argued for the contemporary Christian registers through which people think about and act upon the world. As an integral part of the apparatus of schooling, their "critical" potential exceeds both their historical beginnings and conservative functions (Robbins & Engelke 2010).

It is thus important to remember that the primary advocates of change discussed in

the chapters above have acquired their own education in diverse institutional settings: Myanmar and KIO state schools, international colleges and workshops, as well as theological seminaries and Sunday schools. This is true whether they are working towards new educational paradigms within the existing systems (like Principal Sau Seng of the KIO's Teachers Training College) or towards creating new institutional networks with organisations abroad (like leaders of the private schools in Myitkyina and Laiza). Perhaps most of all, this underlines the significance of trans-local connections, but also the lasting effects of the post-ceasefire changes that allowed for greater mobility of people and resources beyond the immediate Kachin territories. In labouring to apply new ways of thinking about education and development after returning to Kachinland, the practice of these younger educators constitutes a complex negotiation with the existing values in the society. Much of their success lies in the fact that they possess the requisite cultural proficiency and are linked to local institutional networks, including the dominant Christian organisations and the KIO, which give their efforts limited material support, societal reach and popular legitimacy.

Lastly, my aim has been to draw attention to the fact that schooling in the Kachin areas has historically been constituted by a complex assemblage of state and non-state actors. They have long been implicated in local and transnational connections, often working in registers of notable diversity. Returning to the Foucauldian notion of apparatus as a conceptual framework for looking at formal education, it would be useful to recall its rendition by Gilles Deleuze (1991). In Deleuzian verbiage, the apparatus is a "tangle, a multilinear ensemble" (ibid., 159). It traces curves of visibility and expression, granting certain agents visibility and voice, while casting others in obscurity. By breaking out of the geographical and institutional isolation, the post-ceasefire generation of Kachin intellectuals who acquired (secular) education in foreign universities overcame structural marginalisation that made their predecessors literally invisible to institutions outside Myanmar, and curbed their agency locally. To be sure, the other quality of Deleuzian apparatus, namely subjectification, has also made this new and heterogeneous group increasingly dependent on qualifications bestowed by academic institutions outside their immediate social context. But this has equally allowed them to challenge the status

quo that has long pervaded in Myanmar's fragmented borderworlds; for example, by using their credentials to access educational funding from abroad. It is in this sense that the educational apparatus fills a strategic function. By cutting into the everyday it orders, filters, represses and ultimately creates. Historically, the American Baptist missionary schools contributed to the rupture that gave rise to distinct moral worlds in the Kachin Hills. In so doing, they did more than implant pre-existing meanings into a new context. Rather, the missionary encounter combined particular Christian cultural tropes with indigenous repertoires of knowledge and values, creating conditions for the emergence of new institutional structures and meanings in the process. Thus, another way to understand an apparatus is through its "newness" and "creativity content" (Deleuze 1991, 163). Throughout the chapters above, I have tried to keep in focus not merely the negative constraints but also the productive forces that govern the multi-layered field of formal schooling in the contemporary Kachin State.

Whether or not the efforts of Kachin educators to whom this thesis is devoted will have an impact on the national level remains to be seen. In their immediate local contexts, the organisations they have founded have already changed lives and created vital debates around pedagogic practice, political institutions, and religious authority. At the time of writing, NHTOI has significantly expanded its enrolment figures, employed new teachers, and opened several alternate tracks in social sciences and languages. Members of its staff are actively involved in curricular development and several projects of education research. Nawng E Hku has kept its doors open despite government offensives on Laiza and is currently facilitating the exchange of a number of its students to higher education India. The KIO Teachers Training College is experimenting with new models of instructional leadership and negotiating expanding its syllabus to cover subjects beyond pedagogy. People dream of Kachin universities. What can be stated with certainty is that vital grass-roots progress is being made in spite of chronic lack of resources, political marginalisation, and armed conflicts. I hope that, despite its shortcomings, the present work will contribute to these efforts by informing policy makers, inviting constructive critique to its arguments and opening new perspectives of inquiry.

REFERENCES

Abazov, Rafis. 1999. “Central Asia’s Conflicting Legacy and Ethnic Policies: Revisiting a Crisis Zone of the Former USSR.” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 5 (2): 62–90.

Agamben, Giorgio. 2005. *State of Exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 2009. *What Is an Apparatus?: And Other Essays*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Aikman, Sheila, and Pat Pridmore. 2001. “Multigrade Schooling in ‘Remote’ Areas of Vietnam.” *International Journal of Educational Development* 21 (6): 521–36.

Ajayi, J. F. Ade. 1965. *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite*. New York: Longmans.

Althusser, Louis. 1971. *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Anderson, Benedikt. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised Edition*. London: Verso.

Anderson, Gary, and Martha Montero-Sieburth. 1998. “Introduction.” In *Educational Qualitative Research in Latin America: The Struggle for a New Paradigm*, edited by Gary Anderson and Martha Montero-Sieburth. London: Routledge.

Anderson, Robert. 2007. “The Biographical Origins of Political Systems of Highland Burma.” In *Social Dynamics in the Highlands of Southeast Asia*, edited by Francois Robinne and Mandy Sadan, 1–30. Leiden: Brill.

Armbruster, Heidi. 2008. “Introduction: The Ethics of Taking Sides.” In *Taking Sides: Ethics, Politics, and Fieldwork in Anthropology*, 1–22. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reason of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

———. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Standford University Press.

Aung-Thwin, Michael. 1983. “Divinity, Spirit, and Human: Conceptions of Classical Burmese Kingship.” In *Centers, Symbols and Hierarchies: Essays on the Classical States of Southeast Asia*, edited by Lorraine Gesick, 45–85. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Baker, David P., and Donald B. Holsinger. 1996. “Human Capital Formation and School Expansion in Asia.” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. Brill.

Balcells, Laia. 2013. “Mass Schooling and Catalan Nationalism.” *Nationalism and Ethnic*

Politics 19 (4): 467–86.

Ball, Stephen J. 2007. *Education Plc: Understanding Private Sector Participation in Public Sector Education*. London: Routledge.

Bandak, Andreas and Jørgensen, Jonas A. 2013. "Foregrounds and Backgrounds – Ventures in the Anthropology of Christianity" *Ethnos* 77 (4): 447-458.

Barth, Fredrik. 1998. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Long Grove: G. Allen and Unwin.

Batallán, Graciela. 1998. “Appropiating Ethnography for Research in Education: Reflections on Recent Efforts in Argentina and Chile.” In *Educational Qualitative Research in Latin America. The Struggle for a New Paradigm*, edited by Gary Anderson and Martha Montero-Sieburth, 35–50. London: Routledge.

Baudry, Jean-Louis. 2004a. “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus.” In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudry and Marshall Cohen, 6th ed., 355–65. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 2004b. “The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema.” In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudry and Marshall Cohen, 6th ed., 206–23. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BCN. 2014. *Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context. The 2014 Census, Identity and Citizenship in Burma/Myanmar*. 13. Burma Policy Briefing. Amsterdam.

Bénéï, Véronique. 2008. *Schooling Passions: Nation, History, and Language in Contemporary Western India*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bissinger, Jared. 2012. “Foreign Investment in Myanmar: A Resource Boom but a Development Bust?” *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 34 (1): 23–52.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1985. “The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups.” *Theory and Society* 14 (6): 723–44.

———. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. 1977. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. *Reproduction*. London: Sage Publications.

Bowie, Katherine Ann. 1997. *Rituals of National Loyalty: An Anthropology of the State and the Village Scout Movement in Thailand*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Brown, David. 2003. *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*. London: Routledge.

Byam, Paul C. 1997. “New Wine in a Very Old Bottle : Canadian Protestant Missionaries as Facilitators of Development in Central Angola, 1886-1961.” University of Ottawa.

Cady, John. 1975. “Reviewed Work: A Century of Growth: The Kachin Baptist Church of Burma. by Herman G. Tegenfeldt.” *Pacific Affairs* 48 (1): 142–43.

Callahan, Mary P. 2003. “Language Policy in Modern Burma.” In *Fighting Words:*

Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia, edited by Brown E. Michael and Sumit Ganguly, 143–76. Cambridge: MIT Press.

———. 2005. *Making Enemies, War and State Building in Burma*. Ithaca: Conrell University Press.

———. 2007. *Political Authority in Burma's Ethnic Minority States: Devolution, Occupation, and Coexistence*. Washington: East-West Center.

Cannell, Fenella. 2006. "Introduction. The Anthropology of Christianity." in *The Anthropology of Christianity,* edited by Cannell, Fenella, 1-50. London: Duke University Press.

———. 2006. "Reading as Gift and Writing as Theft." in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, edited by Cannell, Fenella, 134-162. London: Duke University Press.

Casanova, Jose. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chakraborty, Dr. Joya. 2012. "Local Self Governance as Democratic Participation: The Unique Case of the Nagas." *Journal Of Business Management & Social Sciences Research* 1 (2): 98–104.

Chalfin, Brenda. 2010. *Neoliberal Frontiers: An Ethnography of Sovereignty in West Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chandler, David P., and David Joel Steinberg. 1987. *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Chilosi, David. 2007. "Old Wine in New Bottles: Civic Nation-Building and Ethnic Nationalism in Schooling in Piedmont, Ca. 1700-1861." *Nations and Nationalism* 13 (3): 417–36.

Chowdhury, Mridul. 2008. "The Role of the Internet in Burma's Saffron Revolution." *Berkman Center Research Publication*, no. 2008-8.

Chun, Allen. 2005. "The Moral Cultivation of Citizenship in a Taiwan Middle School, C. 1990." In *Manufacturing Citizenship: Education and Nationalism in Europe, South Asia and China*, edited by Véronique Bénéï, 57–75. London: Routledge.

Cohen, Abner. 1981. *The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Coleman, Simon. 2006. "Materializig the Self. Words and Gifts in the Construction of Charismatic Protestant Identity." in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, edited by Cannell, Fenella, 163-184. London: Duke University Press.

Coleman, Simon, and Pauline von Hellermann. 2013. "Introduction: Queries, Collaborations, Calibrations." In *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Problems and Possibilities in the Translocation of Research Methods*, 1–15. London: Routledge.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. 1991. *Of Revelation and Revolution. Volume 1: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1997. *Of Revelation and Revolution. Volume 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Coombe, Philip H., and Manzoor Ahmed. 1974. *Attacking Rural Poverty: How Nonformal Education Can Help*. 10091. International Council For Education Development Working Paper. Washington.

Culas, Christiane, and François Robinne. 2009. "Introduction." In *Inter-Ethnic Dynamics in Asia: Considering the Other Through Ethnonyms, Territories and Rituals*, 2:1–11. London: Routledge.

Cummings, John E. 1906. "Phases of Educational Work: Fruitage of the School." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 86.

Das, Veena. 2007. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent Into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Das, Veena, and Deborah Poole. 2004. "State and Its Margins. Comparative Ethnographies." In *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, edited by Veena Das and Deborah Poole, 3–35. Oxford: James Currey.

Datnow, Amanda. 1997. "Using Gender to Preserve Tracking's Status Hierarchy: The Defensive Strategy of Entrenched Teachers." *Anthropology* 28 (2): 204–28.

De Certau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

De Wet, Chris L. 2009. "Between Power and Priestcraft: The Politics of Prayer in 2 Maccabees." *Religion and Theology* 16 (3): 150–61.

Dean, Karin. 2002. "Tackling the Territorial Trap: Kachin Divided by the Sino-Burmese Boundary." PhD thesis, National University of Singapore.

———. 2005. "Spaces and Territorialities on the Sino–Burmese Boundary: China, Burma and the Kachin." *Political Geography* 24 (7): 808–30.

———. 2007a. "Mapping Kachin Political Landscape: Constructing, Contesting and Crossing Boundaries." In *Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma*, edited by Mikael Gravers, 123–48. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

———. 2007b. "The Sites of the Sino-Burmese and Thai-Burmese Boundaries: Transpositions Between the Conceptual and Life Worlds." In *Borderscapes: Hidden Geographies and Politics at Territory's Edge*, edited by Carl Grundy-Warr and Prem Kumar Rajaram, 183–201. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 2011. "Spaces, Territorialities and Ethnography on the Thai-, Sino- and Indo-Myanmar Boundaries." In *Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies*, edited by Doris Wastl-Walter, 219–44. London: Ashgate Publishing.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1991. "What Is a Dispositif?" In *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, edited by Timothy J. Armstrong, 159–68. London: Routledge.

Dewey, John. 1998. *The Essential Dewey: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy. Volume 1*.

Edited by Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Dingrin, La Seng. 2013. “Asia in the Making of Christianity: Conversion, Agency, and Indigeneity, 1600s to the Present.” In *Asia in the Making of Christianity: Conversion, Agency, and Indigeneity, 1600s to the Present*, edited by Richard Fox Young and Jonathan A. Seitz, 109–34. Leiden: Brill.

Dittmer, Lowell. 2008. “Burma vs. Myanmar: What’s in a Name?” *Asian Survey* 48 (6): 885–88.

Donnan, Hastings, and Thomas M. Wilson. 1999. *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

———. 2012. *A Companion to Border Studies*. Edited by Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan. London: Wiley Blackwell.

Easterly, William R. 2001. *The Elusive Quest for Growth*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Egreteau, Renaud. 2012. “Jade, Migration, and Conflict across the Yunnan-Burma Borders.” In *Jade, Migration, and Conflict across the Yunnan-Burma Borders*. Toronto, Canada: Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies.

Ellison, Christopher G., and Darren E. Sherkat. 1993. “Conservative Protestantism and Support for Corporal Punishment.” *American Sociological Review* 58 (1): 131–44.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2002. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.

Falzon, Mark-Anthony. 2009. *Introduction: Multi-Sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research*. London: Ashgate.

Ferme, Mariane C. 2004. “Deterritorialized Citizenship and the Resonances of the Sierra Leonean State.” In *Anthropology in the Margins of the State2*, edited by Veena Das and Deborah Poole, 81–116. London: James Currey.

Fink, Christina. 2001. *Living Silence: Burma Under Military Rule*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.

———. 1991. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin.

———. 1998. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press.

———. 2001a. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

———. 2001b. *Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* London: Routledge.

———. 2002. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Free Burma Rangers. 2012. *Fighting and Ongoing Displacement in Kachin State, Burma: Update*. June 2012. https://www.freeburmarangers.org/2012/06/01/fighting-and-ongoing-displacement-in-kachin-state-burma-update-2

Lampe, Frederick. 2010. "The Anthropology of Christianity: Context, Contestation, Rupture, and Continuity" *Reviews in Anthropology* 39 (1): 66-88.

French, Jan Hoffman. 2006. “Buried Alive: Imagining Africa in the Brazilian Northeast.” *American Ethnologist* 33 (3): 340–60.

Furnivall, J.S. 1948. *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gallego, F. A., and R. Woodberry. 2010. “Christian Missionaries and Education in Former African Colonies: How Competition Mattered.” *Journal of African Economies* 19 (3): 294–329.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Geis, G. J. 1902. “On the Assam-Burma Hillls: The Burma Side.” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 82.

———. 1904. “Nintieth Annual Report - Mytkyina.” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 84.
Gellner, Ernest. 2006. *Nations and Nationalism. Second Edition*. London: Blackwell.
Gennep, Arnold van. 2013. *The Rites of Passage*. London: Routledge.

Goh, Robbie B. H. 2005. *Christianity in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Gow, Peter. 2006. "Forgetting Conversion. The Summer Institute of Linguistics Mission in the Piro Lived World." in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, edited by Cannell, Fenella, 211-239. London: Duke University Press.

Grundy-Warr, Carl. 2004. “The Silence and Violence of Forced Migration: The Myanmar-Thailand Border.” In *International Migration in Southeast Asia*, edited by Aris Ananta and Evi Nurvidya Arifin, 228–73. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Grundy-Warr, Carl, and Karin Dean. 2011. “Not Peace, Not War: The Myriad Spaces of Sovereignty, Peace and Conflict in Myanmar/Burma.” In *Reconstructing Conflict: Integrating War and Post-War Geographies*, edited by Scott Kirsch and Colin Flint, 91–114. London: Ashgate Publishing.

Gupta, Akhil. 1995. “Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State.” *American Ethnologist* 22 (2): 375–402.

Haacke, Jürgen. 2006. *Myanmar’s Foreign Policy: Domestic Influences and International Implications*. Washington.

Hage, G. 2005. “A Not So Multi-Sited Ethnography of a Not So Imagined Community.” *Anthropological Theory*.

Håkansson, N.Thomas. 1998. “Pagan Practices and the Death of Children: German Colonial

Missionaries and Child Health Care in South Pare, Tanzania." *World Development* 26 (9): 1763–72.

Hall, Stuart. 1980. "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms." *Media, Culture and Society* 2: 57–72.
Hamnett, Chris, and Tim Butler. 2013. "Distance, Education and Inequality." *Comparative Education* 49 (3): 317–30.

Hann, Chris. 2007. "The Anthropology of Christianity Per Se" *Archives of European Sociology* 48 (3): 383-410.

Hansen, Thomas Blom, and Finn Stepputat. 2005. "Introduction." In *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*, edited by Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, 1–38. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hanson, Ola. 1903. "Eighty-Ninth Annual Report: Bhamo." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 83.

———. 1908. "Kachins and Singhpos One." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 89.

———. 1913 *The Kachins. Their Customs and Traditions. Rangoon.* American Baptist Mission Press.

Harris, Olivia. 2006 "The Eternal Return of Conversion. Christianity as Contested Domain in Highland Bolivia." in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, edited by Cannell, Fenella, 51-76. London: Duke University Press.

Susan, Harding. 1991. "Representing Fundamentalism: The Problem of the Repugnant Cultural Other" *Social Research* 58 (2): 373-393.

Harker, Richard K. 1984. "On Reproduction, Habitus and Education." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 5 (2): 117–27.

Hefner, Robert W. 1993. "Introduction: World Building and the Rationality of Conversion." In *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, edited by Robert W. Hefner, 3–44. Oakland: University of California Press.

Herzfeld, Michael. 1992. *Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy*. Chicago: Berg Publishers.

———. 1997. *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. London: Rout.

Hirsch, Francine. 2005. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca: Conrell University Press.

Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Howell, Brian M. 2007. "The Repugnant Cultural Other Speaks Back. Christian Identity as Ethnographic 'Standpoint'. *Anthropological Theory* 7 (4): 371–391.

HRW. 2013. *Reforming Telecommunications in Burma. Human Rights and Responsible Investm Ent in Mobile and the Internet*. New York.

ICG. 2004. *Myanmar: Aid to the Border Areas. Asia Report No 82.* Yangon/ Brussels.

———. 2014. *Counting the Costs: Myanmar's Problematic Census*. 144. Asia Briefing. Yangon/ Brussels.

Jackson, Jean E. 2007. "Rights to Indigenous Culture in Colombia." In *The Practice of Human Rights. Tracking Law Between the Global and the Local*, edited by Mark Goodale and Sally Merry, 204–41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

James, Helen. 2009. *Governance and Civil Society in Myanmar: Education, Health and Environment*. London: Routledge.

Jat, Mungchying Rawt. 2013. *Model Villages Are Not a Model*.

Jeganathan, Pradeep. 2004. "Checkpoint. Anthropology, Identity, and the State." In *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, edited by Veena Das and Deborah Poole, 67–80. Oxford: James Currey.

Jinghpaw Shi Laika. 1914. "Inglik Ni Ya Hpyen Galaw Ai Lam." *Jinghpaw Shi Laika* 1(2): 1.
Jonsson, Hjorleifur. 2005. *Mien Relations: Mountain People and Stat Control in Thailand*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

———. 2010. "Mimetic Minorities: National Identity and Desire on Thailand's Fringe." *Identities* 17 (2-3): 108–30.

Kachin News Group. 2014. "Census Data Collection to Begin Early in Kachin State," February 15. http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2632-census-data-collection-to-begin-early-in-kachin-state.html.

Kaplan, Sam. 2006. *The Pedagogical State: Education and the Politics of National Culture in Post-1980 Turkey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kapoor, Dip, and Edward Shizha. 2010. *Indigenous Knowledge and Learning in Asia/Pacific and Africa. Perspectives on Development, Education, and Culture*. Edited by Dip Kapoor and Edward Shizha. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

KDNG. 2007a. *Valley of Darkness: Gold Mining and Militarization in Burma's Hugawng Valley*.

———. 2007b. *Damming the Irrawaddy*.

———. 2008. *Blood Jade: The Burmese Gemstones & Beijing Games*.

———. 2009. *Resisting the Flood*.

Keane, Webb. 2006. "Anxious Transcendence." in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, edited by Cannell, Fenella, 308-324. London: Duke University Press.

Keyes, Charles F. 1977. *The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

———. 2002. "Presidential Address: 'The Peoples of Asia'-Science and Politics in the Classification of Ethnic Groups in Thailand, China, and Vietnam." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61 (4): 1163–1203.

Khin Maung, Ismael M. 1986. *The Population of Burma: An Analysis of the 1973 Census*. Honolulu: East-West Center.

Khun Seng. 2013. “A Development of An Instructional Leadership Model for Schools in the Kachin Area of Myanmar.” Assumption University of Thailand.

Kiik, Laur. “Conspiracies, God’s Plan, and National Emergency: Kachin Popular Analyses of the Ceasefire and Resource Grabs.” In *Ceasefire: Reflections on Community, Politics and Social Change in the Kachin Region of Burma (Myanmar), 1994 to the Present*, edited by Mandy Sadan. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies.

———. 2012. “Environmental Subjectivization, Ethnic Nationalism, and Politics of the Ontological Theorization of ‘Nature’: An Ethnography of Kachin Land, Burma/Myanmar (Keskkondlik Subjektivisatsioon, Etniline Natsionalism Ja ‘Looduse’ Ontoloogilise Teoretiseerimise P.” Columbia University.

Klima, Alan. 2002. *The Funeral Casino: Meditation, Massacre, and Exchange with the Dead in Thailand*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kramer, Tom. 2009. *Neither War nor Peace: The Future of the Cease-Fire Agreements in Burma*. Amsterdam.

Krebs, Viola. 2001. “The Impact of the Internet on Myanmar.” *First Monday* 6 (5).

Kunstadter, Peter et al. 1967. *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations* Edited by Peter Kunstadter. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

La Belle, Thomas J. 1982. “Formal, Nonformal and Informal Education: A Holistic Perspective on Lifelong Learning.” *International Review of Education* 28 (2): 159–75.

Lall, Marie. 2008. “Evolving Education in Myanmar: The Interplay of State, Business and the Community.” In *Dictatorship, Disorder and Decline in Myanmar*, edited by Monique Skidmore and Trevor Wilson, 127–50. Canberra: ANU Press.

Lambek, Michael. 2010. *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Latukefu, Sione. 1967. “Church and State in Tonga : The Influence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries on the Political Development of Tonga, 1826-1875.” Australian National University.

Lave, Jean. 1988. *Cognition in Practice: Mind, Mathematics and Culture in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leach, Edmund. 1947. “Cultural Change. With Special Reference to Hill Tribes of Burma and Assam.” PhD thesis, London School of Economics.

———. 1954. *Political Systems of Highland Burma, a Study of Kachin Social Structure*.Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

———. 1975. “Reviewed Work: The Kachin Baptist Church of Burma: A Century of Growth. by Herman G. Tegenfeldt.” *Man* 10 (1): 168.

Lem, Winnie, and Belinda Leach. 2002. “Introduction.” In *Culture, Economy, Power. Anthropology as Critique, Anthropology as Praxis*, 1–18. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Levinson, Bradley A., Douglas E. Foley, and Dorothy C. Holland. 1996. *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Levinson, Bradley A., and Dorothy C. Holland. 1996. “The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: An Introduction.” In *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice*, edited by Bradley A. Levinson, Dorothy C. Holland, and Douglas E. Foley, 1–56. New York: SUNY Press.

Levinson, Bradley A., and Mica Pollock. 2011. “Introduction.” In *A Blackwell Companion to the Anthropology of Education*, edited by Bradley Levinson and Mica Pollock, 1–8. London: Blackwell.

Lewis, Alison. 2000. “The Western Protestant Missionaries and the Miao in Yunnan and Guizhou, Southwest China.” In *Turbulent Times and Enduring Peoples: Mountain Minorities in the South-East Asian Massif*, edited by Jean Michaud and Jan Ovesen, 79–98. London: Routledge.

Lieberman, Victor B. 1978. “Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma.” *Modern Asian Studies* 12 (03): 455–82.

Lintner, Bertil. 1997. *The Kachin: Lords of Burma’s Northern Frontier*. Chiang Mai: Teak House.

Lorch, Jasmin. 2007. “Myanmar’s Civil Society – a Patch for the National Education System? The Emergence of Civil Society in Areas of State Weakness.” *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 26 (3). Institute of Asian Studies, German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA): 55–88.

———. 2008. “The (Re)-Emergence of Civil Society in Areas of State Weakness: The Case of Education in Burma/Myanmar.” In *Dictatorship, Disorder and Decline in Myanmar*, edited by Monique Skidmore and Trevor Wilson, 151–76. Canberra: ANU Press.

Luykx, Aurolin. 1999. *The Citizen Factory: Schooling and Cultural Production in Bolivia*. New York: SUNY Press.

Lwin, Thein. 2007. *Training Burmese Teachers. Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*. Vol. X. Osaka.

Malkki, Liisa H. 1995. *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Malseed, Kevin. 2008. “Networks of Noncompliance: Grassroots Resistance and Sovereignty in Militarised Burma.” In *Yale Agrarian Studies Colloquium*.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. 1988. *Kingdom’s End and Other Stories*. London: Verso.

Maran, La Raw. 1967. “Towards a Basis for Understanding the Minorities of Burma: The Kachin Example.” In *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations. Vol. 1*, edited by Peter Kunstadter, 125–46. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 2007. “On the continuing relevance of E. R. Leach’s Political Systems of Highland Burma to Kachin Studies” in *Social Dynamics in the Highlands of Southeast Asia: Reconsidering Political Systems of Highland Burma by E.R. Leach*. Edited by Robinne, François and Mandy Sadan. pp. 31-66. Leiden: Brill.

Marcus, George E. 1997. “The Uses of Complicity in the Changing Mise-En-Scène of Anthropological Fieldwork.” *Representations* 59: 85–108.

———. 2009. “Multi-Sited Ethnography: Notes and Queries.” In *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research*, edited by Mark-Anthony Falzon, 181–96. London: Ashgate.

Marcus, George E. 1995. “Ethnography In/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1): 95–117.

Matthews, Bruce. 2001. “The Legacy of Tradition and Authority: Buddhism and the Nation in Myanmar.” In *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth Century Asia*, edited by Ian Harris, 26–54. London: A&C Black.

Maung Maung. 1961. “The Burma-China Boundary Settlement.” *Asian Survey* 1 (1): 38–43.
Maung, Maung. 1980. *Accuracy, Completeness and Adjustment of the 1973 Burma Census*. Seminar Paper. Bombay.

Mazumdar, Shampa, and Sanjoy Mazumdar. 2004. “Religion and Place Attachment: A Study of Sacred Places.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 24 (3): 385–97.

McCarthy, Stephen. 2008. “Overturning the Alms Bowl: The Price of Survival and the Consequences for Political Legitimacy in Burma.” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 62 (3): 298–314.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1962. *The Gutenberg Galaxy : The Making of Typographic Man*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Mead, Margaret. 2001. *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation*. HarperCollins.

Megoran, Nick. 2006. “For Ethnography in Political Geography: Experiencing and Re-Imagining Ferghana Valley Boundary Closures.” *Political Geography* 25 (6): 622–40.

Metro, Rosalie. 2011. “History Curricula and the Reconciliation of Ethnic Conflict: A Collaborative Project with Burmese Migrants and Refugees in Thailand.” Cornell University.

Michaud, Jean, and Jan Ovesen. 2000. *Turbulent Times and Enduring Peoples: Mountain Minorities in the South-East Asian Massif*. London: Routledge.

Milchman, Alan, and Alan. Rosenberg. 2007. “The Aesthetic and Ascetic Dimensions of an Ethics of Self-Fashioning: Nietzsche and Foucault.” *Parrhesia* 2: 44–65.

Miller, Riel. 2008. *Education and Economic Growth: From the 19th to 21st Century*. Cisco Systems White Paper.

Ministry of Immigration and Population. 2014. *The Population and Housing Census of*

Myanmar, 2014: Summary of the Provisional Results. Nay Pyi Daw.

Mizzima. 2010. “Kachin State HIV Rates at Least 16 Times the National Average,” August 4. http://archive-2.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/4199-kachin-state-hiv-rates-at- least-16-times-the-national-average.html.

Mok, Ka Ho. 2011. “Liberalization of the Privateness in Higher Education. Funding Strategies, Changing Governance and Policy Implications in Asia.” In *Public Vices, Private Virtues? Assessing the Effects of Marketization in Higher Education*, edited by Pedro N. Teixeira and David D. Dill, 19–46. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Mookherjee, Nayanika. 2008. “Friendships and Encounters on the Political Left in Bangladesh.” In *Taking Sides: Ethics, Politics, and Fieldwork in Anthropology*, edited by Heidi Armbruster and Anna Lærke, 65–88. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Morrell, Robert. 2001. “Corporal Punishmentand Masculinity in South African Schools.” *Men and Masculinities* 4 (2): 140–57.

Myint-U, Thant. 2004. *Making of Modern Burma*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Nash, June. 1979. “Ethnology in a Revolutionary Setting.” In *The Politics of Anthropology: From Colonialism and Sexism Toward a View from Below*, edited by Gerrit Huizer, 353–72. Bristol: Mouton Publishers.

Nash, Roy. 1990. “Bourdieu on Education and Social and Cultural Reproduction.” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 11 (4). Taylor & Francis Group: 431–47.

Ngo, Thi Thanh Tam. 2010. “Ethnic and Transnational Dimensions of Recent Protestant Conversion among the Hmong in Northern Vietnam.” *Social Compass* 57 (3): 332–44.

O’Connor, James. 2011. *State Building, Infrastructure Development and Chinese Energy Projects in Myanmar*. Bangkok.

Ocobock, Paul. 2012. “Spare the Rod, Spoil the Colony: Corporal Punishment, Colonial Violence, and Generational Authority in Kenya, 1897-1952.” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 45 (1).

Ong, Aihwa. 2000. “Graduated Sovereignty in South-East Asia.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 17 (4): 55–75.

Paasi, Anssi. 1999. “Boundaries as Social Processes: Territoriality in the World of Flows” *Geopolitics* 3 (1): 69–88.

Parry, Jonathan. 1986. "The Gift, the Indian Gift and the 'Indian Gift'" *Man* 21 (3): 453-473.

PBC. 2014. *Myanmar (Burma) - Telecoms, Mobile and Internet*.

Pelkmans, Mathijs. 2006. *Defending the Border: Identity, Religion, and Modernity in the Republic of Georgia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Pettigrew, Judith, Sara Shneiderman, and Ian Harper. 2004. “Relationships, Complicity and Representation: Conducting Research in Nepal during the Maoist Insurgency.” *Anthropology Today* 20 (1): 20–25.

Philp, Janette, and David Mercer. 1999. “Commodification of Buddhism in Contemporary

Burma.” *Annals of Tourism Research* 26 (1): 21–54.

———. 2002. “Politicised Pagodas and Veiled Resistance: Contested Urban Space in Burma.” *Urban Studies* 39 (9): 1587–1610.

Piliavsky, Anastasia. 2013. “Borders Without Borderlands. On the Social Reproduction of State Demarcation in Rajasthan.” In *Borderland Lives in Northern South Asia*, edited by David N. Gellner, 24–46. London: Duke University Press.

Pillay, Pundy. 2010. *Linking Higher Education and Economic Development: Implications for Africa from Three Successful Systems*. Wynberg: Centre for Higher Education Transformation.

Proschan, Frank. 2001. “Peoples of the Gourd: Imagined Ethnicities in Highland Southeast Asia.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60 (4): 999-1032.

Reay, Diane. 1995. “‘They Employ Cleaners to Do That’: Habitus in the Primary Classroom” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 16 (3): 353–71.

———. 2004. “‘It’s All Becoming a Habitus’: Beyond the Habitual Use of Habitus in Educational Research.” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25 (4). Taylor & Francis Ltd: 431–44.

Reed-Danahay, Deborah. 2004. *Education and Identity in Rural France: The Politics of Schooling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reeves, Madeleine. 2005. “Locating Danger: Konfliktologiia and the Search for Fixity in the Ferghana Valley Borderlands.” *Central Asian Survey* 24 (1): 67–81.

Rieffel, Lex, and James W. Fox. 2013. *Too Much, Too Soon? The Dilemma of Foreign Aid to Myanmar/Burma*. Arlington.

Robbins, Joel. 2013. “Beyond the Suffering Subject: Toward an Anthropology of the Good.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (3): 447–62.

Robbins, Joel and Engelke, Matthew. 2010. "Introduction" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109 (4): 623-631.

Roberts, W.H. 1901. “How Church Discipline Strengthened a Weak Disciple.” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 81.

Robinne, François, and Mandy Sadan. 2007. *Social Dynamics in the Highlands of Southeast Asia: Reconsidering Political Systems of Highland Burma by E.R. Leach*. Leiden: Brill.

Rutherford, Danilyn. 2006. "The Bible Meets the Idol. Writing and Conversion in Biak, Irian Jaya, Indonesia." in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, edited by Cannell, Fenella, 240-273. London: Duke University Press.

Rydstrøm, Helle. 2014. “Masculinity And Punishment Men’s Upbringing of Boys in Rural Vietnam.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 29: 497–516.

Sadan, Mandy. 2013. *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in the Borderlands of Burma*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Safford, H.E. 1909. “A Heathen Wedding: A Marriage Ceremony Among the Kachins.” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 89: 443–44.

Sassen, Saskia. 1996. *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Savage, David W. 1997. “Missionaries and the Development of a Colonial Ideology of Female Education in India.” *Gender & History* 9 (2): 201–21.

Schmitt, Carl. 2006. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 2007. *The Concept of the Political*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schober, Juliane. 1997. “Buddhist Just Rule and Burmese National Culture: State Patronage of the Chinese Tooth Relic in Myanma.” *History of Religions* 36 (3): 218–43.

———. 2007. “Colonial Knowledge and Buddhist Education in Burma.” In *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*, edited by Ian Harris, 52–70. London: Routledge.

———. 2010. *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies, and Civil Society*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Schoenhals, Michael. 2005. “Cultural Revolution on the Border: Yunnan’s ‘Political Frontier Defence.’” *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 19 (August): 27–54.

Schweisfurth, Michele. 2011. “Learner-Centred Education in Developing Country Contexts: From Solution to Problem?” *International Journal of Educational Development* 31 (5): 425–32.

Scott, James C. 1987. *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

———. 2010. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sherman, Amy L. 1997. *The Soul of Development: Hardback: Amy L. Sherman - Oxford University Press*. London: Oxford University Press.

Skidmore, Monique. 2003. “Darker than Midnight: Fear, Vulnerability, and Terror Making in Urban Burma (Myanmar).” *American Ethnologist* 30 (1): 5–21.

———. 2004. *Karaoke Fascism. Burma and the Politics of Fear*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Smith, Martin. 1991. *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*. London: Zed Books.

———. 2007. *State Of Strife: The Dynamics Of Ethnic Conflict In Burma. Policy Studies, No. 36*. Washington: East-West Center.

Snitwongse, Kusuma, and Scott W Thompson, eds. 2005. *Ethnic Conflicts in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

South, Ashley. 2008. *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict*. London: Routledge.

Spiro, Melford E. 1982. *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sriprakash, Arathi. 2012. *Pedagogies for Development: The Politics and Practice of Child-Centred Education in India*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Stack, John F. 1986. *The Primordial Challenge: Ethnicity in the Contemporary World*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Stack, John F., and Lui Hebron. 1999. *The Ethnic Entanglement: Conflict and Intervention in World Politics*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.

Stafford, Charles. 1992. "Good Sons and Virtuous Mothers: Kinship and Chinese Nationalism in Taiwan." *Man* 27 (2): 373–78.

Steinberg, David Joel. 2007. "'Legitimacy' in Burma/ Myanmar: Concepts and Implications." In *Myanmar: State, Society and Ethnicity*, edited by N. Ganesan and Kyaw Yin Hlaing, 109–42. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Strange, Susan. 1997. *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.

Strauss, Claudia. 1984. "Beyond 'Formal' versus 'Informal' Education: Uses of Psychological Theory in Anthropological Research." *Ethos* 12 (3): 195–222.

Sword, Gustav A. 1954. *Light in the Jungle: The Life Story of Ola Hanson of Burma*. Rangoon: Baptist Conference Press.

Symaco, Lorraine Pe. 2013. "Geographies of Social Exclusion: Education Access in the Philippines." *Comparative Education* 49 (3): 361–73.

Tabulawa, Richard. 2003. "International Aid Agencies, Learner-Centred Pedagogy and Political Democratisation: A Critique." *Comparative Education* 39 (1). Taylor & Francis Group: 7–26.

Tapp, Nicholas. 1989. "The Impact of Missionary Christianity upon Marginalized Ethnic Minorities: The Case of the Hmong." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 20 (1): 70–95.

Taylor, Robert H. 2009. *The State in Myanmar*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Tegenfeldt, Herman G. 1974. *A Century of Growth: The Kachin Baptist Church of Burma*. South Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Thiha, Aung. 2005. "Kachin State Marching to New Golden Land of Unity and Amity." *The New Light of Myanmar*, February 1.

Tin, U Han. 2004. "Education in Myanmar." In *Australian National University*.

Tishkov, V. 1995. "`Don't Kill Me, I'm a Kyrgyz!': An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 32 (2): 133–49.

Troester, Rod. 2001. "Using the Internet for Peace in Isolated Burma." *Peace Review* 13 (3): 389–94.

Tsing, Anna. 2004. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Turner, Victor. 1974. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Umakoshi, Toru. 2004. “Private Higher Education in Asia: Transition and Development.” In *Asian Universities: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Challenges*, edited by Philip G. Altbach and Toru Umakoshi, 33–52. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Varenne, Herve. 2007. “Difficult Collective Deliberations: Anthropological Notes Toward a Theory of Education.” *Teachers College Recor* 109 (7): 1559–88.

Wa, Maung Shwe. 1963. *Burma Baptist Chronicle*. Rangoon: Burma Baptist

Convention. Walker, Charles F. 1999. *Souldering Ashes: Cuzco and the Creation of Republican Peru, 1780-1840*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Wang, Zhusheng. 1997. *The Jingpo. Kachin People of the Yunnan Plateau*. Tempe: Arizona State University.

Weber, Max. 2001. *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge.

Whitehead, Clive. 1981. “Education in British Colonial Dependencies, 1919-39: A Re-Appraisal.” *Comparative Education* 17 (1): 71–80.

Whitehouse, Harvey. 2006. "Appropriated and Monolithic Christianity in Melanesia." in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, edited by Cannell, Fenella, 295-307. London: Duke University Press.

Williams, Brackette F. 1989. “A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18: 401–44.

Williams, Raymond. 1994. “Selections from Marxism and Literature.” In *Culture/ Power/ History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, edited by Nicholas B. Dirks and Sherry B. Ortner, 585–607. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Willis, Paul E. 1977. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Winichakul, Thongchai. 1994. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Woodberry, Robert T. 2011. “Religion and the Spread of Human Capital and Political Institutions: Christian Missions as a Quasi-Natural Experiment.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Economics of Religion*, edited by Rachel M. McCleary, 111–34. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Woronov, Terry E. 2008. “Raising Quality, Fostering ‘Creativity’: Ideologies and Practices of Education Reform in Beijing.” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 39 (4): 401–22.

Wright, Christie Ann. 2008. “Kachin Refugee Women’s Work Identity: Narratives in

Transition." M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Arlington.

Ying, Lwin. 2013. "The Situation of Kachin Women During the Current Political Crisis." *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 19 (2): 162–92.

Zar Ni. 1998. "Control and Power: The Politics of Education Under Burma's Military Dictatorship (1962-1988)." University of Wisconsin - Madison.

Zerner, Charles. 2003. *Culture and the Question of Rights: Forests, Coasts, and Seas in Southeast Asia*. Durham: Duke University Press.